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DISCOURSES AND SAYINGS
OF
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST

ILLUSTRATED IN

A SERIES OF EXPOSITIONS.

BY JOHN BROWN, D.D.,

PROFESSOR OF EXEGETICAL THEOLOGY TO THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,
AND SENIOR MINISTER OF THE UNITED PRESBYTERIAN CONGREGATION,
BROUGHTON PLACE, EDINBURGH.

ΔΕΙ ΜΝΗΜΟΝΕΤΕΙΝ ΤΩΝ ΛΟΓΩΝ ΤΟΥ ΚΥΡΙΟΥ ΙΗΣΟΥ ΧΡΙΣΤΟΥ

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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MURRAY AND GIBB, PRINTERS, EDINBURGH.

TO JAMES DOUGLAS OF CAVERS, ESQUIRE.

My Dear Sir,

Your honoured name is placed in the front of these volumes, not so much to grace them (though, as Selden says, "bookes are most fitly consecrated to true lovers of goodness and all good learning"), as to gratify their author, by giving him an opportunity of expressing the deep conviction he has long felt, of the important and enduring service you have in your writings done to the cause of christian truth and love; and of recording the pleasure and advantage derived from intercourse with you, for nearly thirty years, and the ever-increasing cordial regard which has grown out of that intercourse.

May God, "even our own God," who has blessed you and made you a blessing to the church and to the world, bless you more and more, and more and more make you a blessing. May you long continue, Sir, to adorn your station, to bless your family, to "devise liberal things," and to add to those literary gifts by which, without impoverishing yourself, you are "making many rich" on earth, and, I doubt not, "laying up for yourself treasure in heaven."

I am, My Dear Sir,

Ever yours,

Most respectfully and affectionately,

JOHN BROWN.

"Jesus would not have been 'Son of God,' and 'Son of Man,' had not his words, like his works, with all their adaptation to the circumstances of the times, contained some things that are inexplicable,—had they not borne concealed within them, the germ of an infinite development, reserved for future ages to unfold. It is *this* feature,—and all the evangelists concur in their representations of it,—which distinguishes Christ from all other teachers of men. Advance as they may, they can never reach him; their only task need be, by taking him more and more into their life and thought, to learn better how to bring forth the treasures that lie concealed in HIM."—NEANDER.

PREFACE.

It is a growing conviction in my mind, that vital and influential Christianity consists, much more than is ordinarily apprehended, in an intimate personal acquaintance and friendship with our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the great revealer of God ; he is the revealed Divinity. The man knows the Father who knows the Son—that man alone knows the Father. Christ is himself “the way, the truth, and the life;” and it is only in so far as we really know and love him, that we are in “the way,” or that “the truth” and “the life” are in us.

To be a Christian, it is not enough that we know and acknowledge a system of doctrine and of law, deduced from the sayings of our Lord and the writings of his apostles. It is necessary that we be acquainted with *his* person, *his* character, and *his* work ; that we know the doctrines of Christianity as *his* mind, the laws of Christianity as *his* will. The very life of Christianity consists in loving, confiding in, obeying *him*, and God *in him* ; and he plainly can be loved, confided in, and obeyed, only in the degree in which he is known. Speculation about the person and work of Christ, however correct, is not the “excellent knowledge” in comparison with which the apostles

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counted all things loss;¹ assent to abstract propositions, however true, is not christian faith; conformity to ethical rules, however good, is not christian obedience.

DR OWEN did good service to the cause of Christianity, two hundred years ago, by showing the pre-eminent place the person of Christ holds in that religion, in opposition to the British rationalists of that age, who had almost lost sight of him in speculation about evidences, and dogmas, and ethics; and SCHLEIERMACHER, and his noble followers, NEANDER and THOLUCK, have done a similar service in opposition to the German rationalists of our times. A personal Deity is the soul of natural religion; a personal Saviour—the real living Christ—is the soul of revealed religion. How strange that it should not be impossible—how sad that, through a perverted ingenuity, it should not be uncommon, in reference to both of these—to convert that into a veil which was meant to be a revelation!

A firm belief of the real existence of Jesus Christ, that is, the belief not merely that a person bearing that name lived in a particular country and age, but that the Jesus Christ of the New Testament really did and does exist, that that strangest of all pictures—the gospel history—represents a reality; this living faith of a living Christ (not by any means so common an acquirement as the former) lies at the foundation of true Christianity; and the superstructure is composed of that transforming intimate acquaintance with *him*, with *his* person, *his* character, *his* mind, *his* will, which is to

¹ Phil. iii. 8.

be obtained by a careful study of that "Scripture given by inspiration of God," which is *His* word—he being at once its author and its subject,—under the promised influence of *His* Spirit—the Spirit of truth and of holiness.

Every part of the inspired volume may be, and ought to be, turned to account in the search after this "excellent knowledge." The study of no portion of Scripture leads more directly to its attainment than that of the gospel histories. Were we carefully pondering these wonderful records, supposing us in possession of the fundamental faith just referred to, we might become better acquainted with our Lord, than any of us is with his most intimate friend. His mind and will are there expressed on a great variety of subjects, with a surprising union of clearness and depth; and we see him placed in an endless variety of circumstances of the most trying kind, which bring out, in strong relief, all the features of his character. We see him, indeed, in far more situations fitted to test the character, and disclose its component elements, than we ever have seen—ever can see—any man. And in his case we have this advantage—we are quite sure of two things, of neither of which we can be perfectly certain where a mere man is the object of knowledge, and human testimony is the medium through which our knowledge is obtained: We know, and are sure, that Jesus Christ was exactly what he appeared to be, and that his biographers represent him exactly as he was. In him there was nothing assumed—all was real; and with them there is no misrepresentation. They state exactly what took place,—“ what they saw and heard, that

they declare to us,"—without extenuation, without exaggeration. He could make only a partial revelation of himself—for the capacities of men enabled them to receive only such a revelation,—but the revelation was perfect so far as it went. His biographers could tell us only what they knew, but they tell us that to the life.

With these convictions, I have always held that the study of the gospel history, and especially of "The Discourses and Sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ"—into whose "lips grace was poured,"—who had "the tongue of the learned," and "spake as never man spake,"—is one of the most probable means of promoting real vital Christianity in ourselves, and that an exposition of these is one of the most probable means of promoting it in others. It is in the hope of, in some degree, contributing to these ends, that the following Expositions have been prepared, and are now given to the public.

These remarks will be misunderstood, if they be considered as, in the slightest degree, disparaging the epistolary part of the New Testament. In some points of view *that*, as the completion of the code of divine doctrine and law, given by its Divine Author, not on earth, but from heaven, is peculiarly valuable; but there is comparatively little, if anything, in the apostolical epistles, of which the germ is not to be found in the gospels. The declarations of the apostles are but the development of their Master's thoughts,—a commentary—an infallible one—on his sayings; and we do not rightly estimate these divine writings, if we do not consider them as a part of *his* word; nor rightly use them, if we do not employ

them for the purpose of better understanding *his* mind and heart, and so bringing our minds and hearts into conformity with his.

The general name of EXPOSITIONS has been given to the discourses contained in these volumes, because no other designation in common use could have accurately described them all. There will be found among them specimens of what are usually in Scotland called LECTURES, in all the forms which they ordinarily assume—*scholia*, on particular words and phrases—continuous comment, and illustrated analysis; and the illustrations of the “Sayings” of our Lord, as distinguished from his “Discourses” generally, take the shape of the Expository Sermon. But, in all the Discourses, Exposition will be found to be the staple; whatever is doctrinal, experimental, or practical, being presented as the result of the application of the principles of strict exposition to the passage under consideration.

In preparing these volumes for the press, I have studied the original text of their subjects with all the grammatical and lexical helps I possessed. I have further availed myself of every assistance within my reach, to be derived from versions of, and commentaries on, the passages explained. My aim was, not to produce an original work, but a satisfactory exposition of an important portion of Scripture; and if I shall be found in any measure to have succeeded, it will not in any wise diminish my satisfaction, that my success be considered the result less of independent thinking or discovery on my part, than of having carefully consulted and deliberately weighed the inquiries and conclusions of others. In every

case, indeed, I claim to have exercised my own judgment; but I have always felt more satisfied when I found myself, as I have usually done, following in the track of the learned and pious of former generations, than when compelled, as I have sometimes been, to walk alone.

It might wear the appearance of ostentation to present a formal list of the works, in various languages, which have been consulted. It is but an act of justice, however, to say that, besides the more ordinary commentaries, ancient and modern, I have found advantage from the works of the following authors:—CALVIN, CHEMNITZ, CARTWRIGHT, RUS, PEARCE, SAURIN, MACKNIGHT, CAMPBELL, BENNET, OLSHAUSEN, and NEANDER, on the gospels generally; MELANCTHON, ROLLOCK, HUTCHESON, LAMPE, MORUS, TITTMANN, and THOLUCK, on the gospel by John; KNAPP, in his "*Scripta Varii Argumenti*," on the Gospel of the Kingdom—John iii. 14-21; AUGUSTINE, EPISCOPIUS, BLACKALL, BLAIR, VERNEDE, BREWSTER, THOLUCK, and TRENCH, on the Sermon on the Mount; NORRIS and GROVE, on the Beatitudes. My obligations to the judicious work of BREWSTER are peculiarly numerous.

In illustrating the valedictory discourse, I have been much indebted to GERHARD and to BENGEL,¹ but still more to the Lectures of my accomplished relative, the Rev. JOHN BROWN PATTERSON,² whom the Disposer of

¹ "Bengelius magnam sagacitatem in rimandis ac presse explicandis sententiis verborumque etiam minimorum significatibus consumsit."—WINER. I am glad to learn that we are soon to have an English translation of that very remarkable book, his "Gnomon."

² Late minister of Falkirk. Ordained Feb. 26, 1830; died June 29, 1835. His Prize Essay, "On the National Character of the Athenians,"—Additional Notes to his grandfather's "Self-interpreting Bible,"—an Intro-

all things, whose judgments are a great deep, after having remarkably prepared, both intellectually and spiritually, for eminent usefulness, withdrew so soon, and so suddenly, from the sphere of ministerial labour. These Lectures, viewed as the ordinary weekly preparations of a young minister, are, for depth of thought and feeling, and for beauty of expression, indeed wonderful.

The admirable illustrations of the fourteenth chapter of the gospel by John, by my lamented friend, the Rev. DR HEUGH, did not come into my hand till the Exposition of that chapter had passed through the press. Had I seen them before I composed it, I might probably have thought such a work unnecessary; and even after it was prepared for the press, the perusal of them might, perhaps, have on the same ground shaken my determination to give it to the world. I do not, however, regret the circumstances in which I find myself placed. By the perusal of DR HEUGH's masterly lectures, as well as of the eloquent discourses of my gifted kinsman, my impressions of the transcendent excellence of our common theme have been deepened; and in declaring the unsearchable riches of our common Lord's wisdom and love, I have a solemn delightful "fellowship of the spirit" with those two very dear friends, who, "being dead, yet speak." Their expositions will come into many hands into which mine will not;—mine may come into some hands into which theirs may not;—and should they all come into the same hands, I am

ductory Essay to a Selection from Jeremy Taylor's Works, his Remains, with a Memoir by his Friend, G. G. Cunningham, Esq.,—and the Lectures referred to,—are permanent memorials of his endowments and acquirements as a scholar, a theologian, and a christian minister.

persuaded our occasional diversity, and our general agreement, will, each in its own way, conduce to stir and to satisfy the minds of our readers.

Specific obligations to the authors consulted have generally been acknowledged in the margin, and would have been so uniformly, but for the fact that most of the discourses were written without the press being seen even dimly in the distance ; and therefore, except where not merely thoughts and expressions, but sentences, had been borrowed, the marks of reference were not very scrupulously appended in the original manuscript.

As the Work was intended for the edification of Christians in general, whatever could be interesting or useful only to the scholar has, as in my Exposition of the First Epistle of Peter, been cast into the notes in the margin, or at the end of the several Expositions. More time and attention have been bestowed on the collection and preparation of these notes, than, from their comparative fewness and brevity, might perhaps be supposed ; and to my brethren in the ministry, I am persuaded, they will not be the least acceptable and useful part of the Work.

In conducting the Work through the press, I have had the kind assistance of several friends. To the Rev. Dr JOHN TAYLOR of Auchtermuchty, for the careful revision of the corrected proofs, and to my brother-in-law, the Rev. DAVID SMITH of Biggar, for the preparation of the indices, I think it but due to make this public acknowledgment.

ARTHUR'S LODGE, NEWINGTON,
July 1850.

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DISCOURSES AND SAYINGS

OF

OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

EXPOSITION I.

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM.

JOHN iii. 14-21.—And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up; that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.

INTRODUCTION.

THESE “golden sentences” occur in the narrative of a conversation between our Lord Jesus Christ, and Nicodemus a ruler of the Jews. To understand the record of any conversation aright, it is of great importance to know its occasion—the characters of those engaged in it, and the circumstances in which it took place. These, in the case before us, are but imperfectly known to us; but we shall find that even the very partial notices we have of them, cast much light on what would otherwise be very obscure, if not altogether unintelligible.

Jesus Christ, attended by his five disciples, Peter, and Andrew, and John, and Philip, and Nathaniel,¹ had come up from Galilee to Jerusalem.² His external appearance was that of a Jew of humble rank, and his followers were men belonging to the same class in society as himself. His expulsion of those traffickers who had desecrated the temple by making one of its courts the scene of their secular commerce, and his performance of a number of miracles, had, however, drawn on him a considerable share of public attention;³ and many had been induced to regard him as a divine messenger or prophet; though the majority of those who had formed this opinion were persons entirely under the influence of the sentiments almost universally prevalent among the Jews respecting the design of the Messiah's mission, and the nature of the kingdom which he was to establish in the world.

Among these individuals was Nicodemus, a member of the sect of the Pharisees, which embraced in it the great body of the apparently pious of the Jews; a man of high rank and respectable character; a ruler of the Jews;⁴ a "councillor," or member of the Sanhedrim, the highest court of judicature among the Jews; and a "master in Israel," or expositor of the Jewish law. This man—though he appears at this period to have been entirely secular in his opinions and expectations respecting the Messiah, one of those who were looking, not for a spiritual saviour, but for a temporal deliverer; not for a personal salvation from guilt and depravity and endless ruin, but for a national deliverance from the foreign yoke of the Romans—seems to have been a person of an inquisitive and candid mind.

It is not at all likely that he entertained the idea that this worker of miracles was, or even that he might be, the Messiah, the promised deliverer, with regard to whose appearance all men's minds were in a state of excited expectation. He must have looked for the Messiah, not from

¹ John i. 40-49.

² John ii. 13.

³ John ii. 14-23.

⁴ John iii. 1.

Nazareth, but from Bethlehem; not in the person of an obscure Galilean stranger, but in an acknowledged descendant of the ancient royal house of David.

But he had come to the conclusion that this young Nazarene was a divinely commissioned messenger, and he wished to have some private conversation with him; no doubt, respecting that "kingdom of God," or "of heaven," which both John the Baptist and Jesus had declared was "at hand," just about to be established. Probably from a fear of involving himself in danger, either from his colleagues in the Sanhedrim, or from the Roman government, he seems to have wished that the interview should be as private as possible, and accordingly he "came to Jesus by night."

He introduced himself by declaring his conviction, founded on the miracles which he had witnessed, that Jesus was a divine messenger:—"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him."¹ Instead of permitting him to unfold the purpose of his visit, Jesus, who "knew what was in man," and often answered men's thoughts rather than their words,² replied in a manner which showed that he was acquainted with what was passing in his visitor's mind. Instead of showing himself flattered by the recognition of his divine mission by a man of such high rank and extensive influence, and endeavouring to secure his assistance in establishing his claims, he in effect states, that Nicodemus was completely mistaken on the subject about which he had come to converse, and that without a complete change in his mode of thinking, and in his mode of feeling too, he could never become a partaker of the privileges of the new order of things to be established by the Messiah, nor even distinctly apprehend their nature. "Except a man," any man, every man, Jew as well as Gentile, undergo a change not less extensive and thorough than that which a heathen

¹ John iii. 2.

² John viii. 7; vi. 26, 35, 64, 65.

does when he becomes a Jew, and which the Jews were accustomed to call a new birth,—“except a man be born again, he cannot see ¹ the kingdom of God.” ²

Nicodemus, if, as is not improbable, he had heard the preaching of John, and even submitted to his baptism, had not complied with the injunction “repent”—change your views and expectations respecting the kingdom of God;—and therefore our Lord thus turns his attention to the nature and necessity of this “repentance,” ³ this thorough inward change, under another and still more impressive representation.

“The kingdom of God”—a phrase derived from a remarkable prediction of the Prophet Daniel, ⁴—denotes the order of things to be established by the Messiah, an order of things rich in blessings to his subjects, both in this life, and in that which is to come—both on earth and in heaven.

To “see” the kingdom of heaven, may signify either to apprehend the truth with respect to this order of things, or to enjoy its peculiar privileges. Both ideas may be included, as it is through apprehending the truth respecting the kingdom that men become partakers of its privileges. It is a phrase of similar import as to “see good,” to “see death,” to “see God,” to “see of the travail of his soul.” ⁵

To be “born again,” is equivalent to the undergoing of a thorough change, beneficial in its character, and the cause of which is not in the individual who undergoes it. ⁶

Nicodemus, who thought that the Jews, because descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, were to be the subjects of the Messiah, “the children of the kingdom,” declared that this statement of Jesus seemed as strange to him as if he had said that a man of mature age must, in the literal

¹ Dr Campbell's note deserves to be carefully perused.

² John iii. 3.

³ *μετανοεω*.

⁴ Dan. ii. 44.

⁵ Ps. xxxiv. 12. John viii. 51. Matth. v. 8. Isa. liii. 11.

⁶ Erasmus Cyrilli opinionem sequutus adverbium *ἀνωθεν* male transtulit “e supernis:” Ambigua est, fateor, illius significatio apud Græcos, sed Christum Hebraicé cum Nicodemo loquutum esse scimus. Porro illic amphibologiæ locus non fuisset, qua deceptus Nicodemus in secunda carnis natiuitate pueriliter hesitat.—CALVIN *in loc.*

^{*} See Note A.

sense of the terms, be born again. "Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"¹

It is not at all necessary that we should suppose Nicodemus to have been so stupid as to apprehend our Lord's obviously figurative language literally, or so profane as to attempt to turn into ridicule the words of one whom he acknowledged to be a "teacher come from God." It was customary among the Jews, as has been already hinted, when a heathen proselyte was admitted into "the commonwealth of Israel," to term the change he underwent a new-birth. In Nicodemus' estimation he, and all Israelites, being the children of Abraham, were also "children of the kingdom." "The kingdom of heaven" was, in their reckoning, merely the more complete development of the theocratic system under which they already were; and he could not conceive what change was necessary to pass on them, to secure their sharing in its immunities and privileges. Had Jesus said, unless a Gentile be born again, "he cannot see the kingdom of heaven," this could have been understood. But the general declaration, "except a man," very probably so uttered as to convey the idea, except *you*, be born again (for it is plainly to this saying, and the equally indefinite one in the 7th verse, that our Lord refers, when he says, "marvel not that I said to thee" a councillor, a master in Israel, "ye" Jews "must be born again"), was so utterly incongruous with all his notions, that he in effect says, 'This new birth on the part of Jews, in order to their becoming participants of the honours and blessings of the Messiah's reign, seems to me as strange and incredible, and useless a thing, as a grown-up man being again born of his mother.'

Jesus repeated the statement, adding some circumstances fitted to lead Nicodemus into correct views with regard to the nature of that change which he had represented as

¹ John iii. 4.

necessary for the enjoyment of the advantages of the Messiah's reign:—"Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born of water,¹ and of the Spirit, he cannot enter² into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh;³ and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind 'bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit,"⁵—*q. d.*, 'Strange as my statement may appear to you, it is indubitably true. The change I refer to is not one of external profession merely, but of inward character. Except a man not only make a profession of a change of mind, such as that made by those who submitted to John's baptism; but actually undergo that change of mind which is produced by the operation of the Holy Ghost, he cannot be a participant of the blessings of the Messiah's reign.'^{6 b}

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." "Flesh" may here mean, 'human nature as depraved,' or 'human nature apart from supernatural influence.' In the first case it is, *q. d.*, 'Depraved man can have a son only in his own likeness. Man must become God's son to become fit for His holy kingdom.' In the second case it is, *q. d.*, 'As the natural descendants of Abraham, you may be, you are, possessors of external privileges; but you must be spiritually born, that is, in your inward views and feelings you must be radically changed, in order to your being fitted to enjoy spiritual privileges.

¹ Aqua denotat Baptismum Joannis in Christum Jesum, v. 23, 24.—BENGEL.

² Crescit severitas. Non potest intrare nedum videre. Quod non natum est neque oculis, neque pedibus utitur.—BENGEL.

³ Caro vera, sed et caro mera, spiritus expers, spiritui adversa.—BENGEL.

⁴ Spiritus, proprie, nam huic non vento voluntas et vox est; et ex hoc nascimur, et qui ex hoc nascitur est, ut hic. Cum vento non immediate comparatur renatus, sed spiritus ipse.—BENGEL.

⁵ John iii. 5, 6.

⁶ From the fact that Jesus says nothing more of the water, but proceeds to explain the operations of the Spirit, it is plain that the former was merely a point of departure to lead to the latter.—NEANDER.

^b See Note B.

The Jewish people are born of the flesh,—“of blood, of the will of the flesh, of the will of man,”¹ they are men, and may enjoy those external privileges, which it is competent for you as *men* to enjoy; but the kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom, none but those who are spiritual can enjoy its privileges, and none can be spiritual without a thorough change being produced on their spiritual nature by “the Spirit,” plainly the Spirit of God.^c This seems wonderful to you; but that is no reason why you should not believe it.’

The words that follow have been usually thus interpreted:—‘You have had no experience of this spiritual change, and you have no distinct notion of how it is to be produced, or why it is necessary; but you never think of denying the existence of wind, which indeed proves itself by its effects, though it is invisible, and though its movements are regulated by laws over which you have no control, and of which you have little knowledge.’

This interpretation does not seem to be satisfactory, as it obliges us to give to the word which occurs so often in the passage,² properly rendered “Spirit,” an unusual sense, that of “wind.” I am therefore inclined to keep to the ordinary sense of the word, Spirit, retaining the same meaning throughout, and to consider our Lord as saying, ‘This spiritual new birth which you find it so difficult to understand and believe, has the common character of spiritual operations. For example, in inspiration (with which the Jews were familiar,) “The Spirit breathes where he pleases:” you do not know the reason or manner of his commencing, or the reason or manner of his terminating, his operations on the inspired person, but you observe its effects, “you hear his voice,” you have the revelation. “Thus it is with every one born of the Spirit.”’ It is not a comparison of the operation of the wind and that of the Spirit. It is not a com-

¹ John i. 13.² πνεῦμα^c See Note C.

parison at all. It is a statement of a general law, and an assertion that the case referred to is an exemplification of it. The change is an internal spiritual change. It is the work of the Spirit, who, in this case, as usually, does not unfold the reason and manner of his operations, but manifests their effects.¹

Nicodemus, more and more perplexed, utterly incapable of reconciling these statements, as to complete internal change being necessary even on a Jew, in order to his being a sharer of the privileges of the Messiah's kingdom, with the notions he had from his infancy entertained respecting the design of the appearance of that long promised Prince, exclaimed, "How can these things be?"² "And no wonder," as Neander says, "a dead, contracted, arrogant, scribe-theology, is always amazed at the mysteries of inward spiritual experience." Our Lord replied, "Art thou a master in Israel,³ and knowest not these 'things'?"⁴

These words seem to imply, that if he had studied the Old Testament Scriptures he might have known, that an internal change was necessary for enjoying the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom. 'Had you understood those Scriptures, with the letter of which, as "a master in Israel," you are so familiar, you must have known that that kingdom is to be spiritual in its nature, and that no man with the carnal conceptions common among the Jews, can understand its nature or enjoy its blessings.' Our Lord probably refers to such passages as the following: "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you." "Behold, the days come, saith the

¹ This is the view taken by Bengel and Schoettgen, among others.

² John iii. 9.

³ "The teacher of Israel."—CAMPBELL.

⁴ Est emphasis in voce *ταῦτα*.—CALVIN.

⁵ John iii. 10.

Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah ; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers : But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel ; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts, and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”¹

Our Lord proceeded to assert the truth and importance of the statement he had made : “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen, and ye receive not our witness.”² “ We ” not improbably includes John the Baptist, whose doctrine of repentance or change of mind, is entirely coincident with our Lord’s doctrine of the new birth. Our Lord thus gently, but powerfully, exposed Nicodemus’ inconsistency, *q. d.*, ‘ You say that you know that I am a teacher sent from God, and you admit John to be a prophet; and yet when we tell you what we know to be true, instead of readily receiving it, you doubt, and hesitate, and object, and cavil. You are come to inquire of me concerning the nature of the Messiah’s kingdom, but how will you ever receive the truth respecting it, so widely different from what you as a Jew expect, when you discover so much backwardness to receive the doctrine comparatively level to your comprehension, that a great inward change, to be effected by the Spirit of God, is necessary to the enjoyment of its blessings, and indeed to the understanding of its nature?’

“ If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe if I tell you of heavenly things?”³ *q. d.*, ‘ Your behaviour gives me little encouragement to go forward and unfold to you the truth about that kingdom of God, to inquire about which was the great purpose of your visit. For if you find so much difficulty in receiving what is comparatively an earthly thing, a doctrine respecting things level to ordinary apprehensions—the doctrine that carnal men—men occupied with sensible and present things, must

¹ Ezek. xxxvi. 26-27. Jer. xxxi. 31-33. ² John iii. 11. ³ John iii. 12.

undergo an inward change, a change of mind and heart, of conviction and feeling, must become spiritual men to fit them for the reception of a spiritual Saviour, and the possession of a spiritual salvation, how shall you ever be brought to believe "the heavenly things," the doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, which is as remote, as heaven is from earth, from anything which could have entered into the mind of man; the doctrine of the manner in which spiritual blessings are to be obtained by the Messiah, the persons for whom they are to be obtained, and the manner in which they are to be invested with them?'^d

The doctrine of our Lord here is that so plainly taught by his Apostles, that to understanding and enjoying the blessings of the christian salvation, a thorough change of nature, of mind and heart, is necessary. "If any man be in Christ Jesus, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, and all things are become new." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness to him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned." As Christians, "we are God's workmanship, created *anew* in Christ Jesus to good works."¹

"And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of Man which is in heaven,"² *q. d.*, 'These heavenly things have never yet been clearly unfolded to men. No man has been in heaven to penetrate into these yet hidden counsels of God. "The Son of Man" (a name borrowed from the Old Testament Scriptures, by which the Messiah was indicated),—the Son of Man who had been in heaven "with God,"³ aye, whose residence as to his higher nature is even now in heaven, he alone can reveal them.'⁴ Our Lord does not here say in direct terms

¹ 2 Cor. v. 17. 1 Cor. ii. 14. Eph. ii. 10. ² John iii. 13. ³ John i. 1; vi. 62.

^d "ὁ υἱός" has generally (*e. g.*, by Erasm. Ernesti, &c.) been regarded as the participle of the imperfect—the same with ἵς, ἔς. Now, although this is admissible, the connection here rather indicates the proper meaning of the present." —THOLUCK. Dr Campbell translates it "whose abode is in heaven."

⁴ See Note D.

^e See Note F.

that HE was this Son of Man, though the words, and probably the manner, seem to have been intended to suggest this idea.

All this statement, infinitely important as it is, is properly speaking preliminary, and it is at the 12th verse that our Lord proceeds to tell of "heavenly things;" to reveal the doctrines of the kingdom. To understand our Lord's words aright, we must never forget that he was teaching the true doctrine of the kingdom of heaven, of the deliverance to be accomplished by the Messiah, to a pharisaic Jew, who laboured under the false notions common to his nation and sect.

Had Nicodemus been called on to state his opinion about the kingdom of heaven, it probably might have been done in some such terms as these:—'Like David the king of Israel, the Son of Man, Messiah the Prince, shall be lifted up, exalted, to a glorious throne, that all the Jewish people may be delivered from degradation and slavery, and raised to dignity, wealth, and power: For Jehovah loves his peculiar people, and gives them that illustrious person, called in the prophets his own, his begotten, Son, to be their deliverer and ruler; and while he sends him to deliver Israel, he sends him also to punish and destroy the Gentile nations, and all Israelites shall enjoy the blessings of his reign, while all the Gentiles who do not submit to Him, and become tributaries to the holy nation, shall fall before his triumphant arms.'

Hear, however, the true doctrine of the kingdom of God from him who comes to establish it. 'Messiah shall indeed be lifted up,¹ not however as David was exalted to the throne, but as the brazen serpent was elevated on a pole, and the purpose of his being thus lifted up is not Israel's temporal deliverance, but men's spiritual and everlasting salvation, that men might not perish but have eternal life; and the manner in which men are to obtain possession of this salva-

¹ "Lifted up" is a feeble rendering for *ὑψώσεται*; Campbell's version is preferable—"placed on high."

tion, is not by being born Jews, or by submitting, if Gentiles, to the resistless arms of an earthly conqueror; it is by believing the truth about this deliverance. Whosoever believeth shall not perish, but have eternal life: For God so loved, not Israel merely, but the world, that he *gave*—devoted to death as a victim—his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life: For God sent not his Son to destroy the Gentile nations, but to be the Saviour of men, without reference to their national descent; and all who believe the truth with respect to this spiritual Deliverer, shall be made partakers of his spiritual salvation, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; while all who do not believe the truth, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, shall be excluded from the blessings of his salvation, and be punished for their rejection of the Heavenly Messenger, and his heavenly message.' Such, in substance, is our Lord's statement; and if Nicodemus in any good measure apprehended its meaning, he must have been persuaded now of the truth of our Lord's statement, "that a man must indeed be born again;" that even a Jew must undergo a very thorough change of mind and heart to see, or to enter into *this* kingdom.

Let us now examine our Lord's doctrine of the kingdom of the Messiah somewhat more particularly. Let us attend to the account contained in the words before us,—

I. Of the Messiah—the only begotten Son of God—the Son of Man—sent by the Father.

II. Of the design of the Messiah's mission: negatively, not to condemn the world; positively, that the world through him might be saved—that they should not perish, but have everlasting life.

III. Of the grand means by which this design was to be accomplished—by the Messiah's being lifted up as the brazen serpent was lifted up in the wilderness—by God's giving him.

IV. Of the manner of obtaining a personal interest in

the blessings thus procured—believing the Divine revelation respecting the Messiah.

V. Of the origin of this economy of mercy—the love of God to the world.

VI. Of the guilt and punishment of those who refuse to avail themselves of this method of salvation.

Let us turn our attention to these most important topics in their order.

I.—OF THE MESSIAH.

Let us consider the account here given of the Messiah. He is described as the only begotten Son of God—as the Son of Man—and as Sent by the Father.

§ 1. *The Son of God.*

The Messiah is described as “the only begotten Son of God.”¹ This is an appellation of the Messiah borrowed from the 2nd Psalm, which is obviously prophetic and Messianic. “I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.” It must be plain to every reflecting mind, that such terms as those now under consideration, when applied to denote the relation subsisting between our Lord and his divine Father, must be understood in a figurative, or, more properly speaking, perhaps, an analogical sense. The principle of interpreting such phrases is a plain one. It is this, that the terms are to be understood in their ordinary meaning as far as, and no farther than, we know from satisfactory sources they are not inapplicable to the subject in reference to which they are employed. “Son” is a word descriptive of a human relation with which we are familiar, and in its proper literal meaning suggests the following ideas:—

¹ John iii. 16.

Identity of nature—derivation of being—posteriority—inferiority—similarity—mutual affection. “Only begotten Son” suggests the idea of the individual being the only person standing in that relation to him who is termed the Father; and the idea also of that concentration of affection which naturally originates in this circumstance.

Now, what are we taught in reference to the Messiah, when he is called “the only begotten Son of God?” We are taught, in the first place, that he is of the same nature with his Father—that is, that he is God. The word Son suggests this idea, and much more strongly, when it has the epithet “only begotten” prefixed to it, or when he is called God’s “own Son”—“the Son of himself”—“his *proper* Son,” in contradistinction to those who receive this appellation merely from their being brought into a peculiar relation, formed to a peculiar character, and being the objects of a peculiar affection on the part of God, while God is the object of a peculiar affection on their part. When the Messiah is termed the only begotten Son of God, his proper divinity is asserted. He who is our Saviour is “the great God.”

The ideas of derivation of being, posteriority, and inferiority, though naturally suggested by the name Son, are not to be considered as intended to be conveyed by that term when applied to the Messiah; for this plain reason, that these ideas are incompatible with that identity of nature which is the very first idea suggested by the term, and which, from innumerable passages of Scripture, we know does belong to him.

A second truth in reference to the Messiah, suggested by his being called “the only begotten Son,” is, that while He is of the same nature with the Father, He and the Father are in some respects distinct from each other. The Father is not the Son, nor is the Son the Father; though in reference to the possession of the one divine nature the Father and the Son are one.

A third important truth taught us by the Messiah being termed the only Begotten of God, is, that he is the object of the supreme love of the Father. A father loves his son, especially his only son. The love of the First person of the Godhead to the Second is expressed by the love which a father has for his son, his only son. "The Father loves the Son."¹ He knows his infinite excellence; and, if I may use the expression, which seems to imply a solecism, up to the infinite measure of his knowledge he loves him. This last idea seems obviously to have been intended to be brought before the mind in the passage under consideration, as what chiefly commends the love of God to the world, is that he gave his only Son to be their Saviour. These, then, are the truths respecting the Messiah taught us by his being termed "the only begotten Son of God."

§ 2. *The Son of Man.*

The Messiah is described as "the Son of Man."² This is an appellation which our Lord employs more frequently than any other in speaking of himself, whether in private or public, in the midst of his friends or of his enemies. The phrase, taken by itself, seems just a Hebraism for "man:"—In the 4th verse of the 8th Psalm, "What is *man* that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?" Every one at all acquainted with the use of parallelism in Hebrew composition generally, and especially in Hebrew poetry, must see that "man," and "the son of man," are just equivalent expressions.

To understand its meaning, when used as an appellation of the Messiah, we must turn to a passage in the 80th Psalm, v. 17. "Let thy hand be upon the Man of thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom thou madest strong for thyself;" the same person who is spoken of in the 15th verse under another of the figurative prophetic appellations of

¹ John v. 20.

² John iii. 13, 14.

the Messiah—"the branch" which Jehovah had made strong for himself. In the passage generally referred to as the origin of the appellation, Daniel v. 9, 14, the reference, no doubt, is to the Messiah; but he is there spoken of, not as the Son of Man, but as "one like unto the Son of Man," or having the appearance of a man. While the expression, a son of man, as we have already remarked, is in itself just equivalent to man; the designation, "the Son of Man," at once marks the Messiah, as truly a man, and at the same time, as distinguished from all other men. He is so distinguished in a variety of ways: as the perfect, the normal man—the representative man, the second Adam—the God-man, God manifest in the flesh—and the predicted man, the great subject of Old Testament prophecy.¹

§ 3. *Sent by the Father.*

The Messiah is farther described as "sent by the Father"²—"God sent his Son." In the economy of human redemption, the Father sustains the majesty of the Divinity. He is the fountain of authority, the source of judgment and of mercy. He vindicates the honours of the Divine character, and asserts the rights of the Divine government; and he, too, dispenses pardon and salvation in a way consistent with the illustration of these honours, and the maintenance of these rights. While essentially the Father and the Son are one in the economy of grace, the Father is greater than the Son. He invests him with the character of Mediator and Saviour; he qualifies him for the discharge of its duties; he supports him under its labours and difficulties; and he rewards him for the accomplishment of the work given him to do.

When the Father is said to have sent the Son, the meaning is, that Jesus Christ was divinely authorised and com-

¹ For a full illustration of this descriptive appellation, *vide* Sermon I., appended to the first edition of *Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of Peter*.

² John iii. 17.

missioned to act as the Saviour of the world; to do and suffer all that was necessary for the attainment of the salvation of man, in accordance with the perfections of the Divine character, and the principles of the Divine government. Such is the view given us of the Messiah in these words of our Lord—a person uniting in himself the natures of God and man, and divinely appointed to effect the salvation of mankind.

II.—OF THE DESIGN OF THE MESSIAH'S MISSION.

The next topic to which our attention must be directed, is the design of the Messiah's mission. That is described in various ways, all of them having a reference to the false views of the design of the Messiah's mission entertained by the Jews. It is described negatively : He was sent "not to condemn the world." Then it is described positively : First generally—"to save the world;"¹ and then more particularly, to deliver them from the greatest possible evil—"that they might not perish;" and to raise them to the enjoyment of the greatest good—"that they might have everlasting life."² Let us shortly consider the meaning of these various descriptions of the design of the Messiah's mission.

§ 1. *Negatively, not to condemn the world.*

The design of the Messiah's mission was not to condemn or punish "the world." "The world" here is obviously to be understood, as the Jews used the term, of all mankind, with the exception of themselves, the holy nation. They expected that the Messiah was to deliver the people of Israel, and to punish and destroy the Gentile nations. The deliverance of Israel, and the punishment of the nations, were to them ideas closely connected, and both were to be the work

¹ John iii. 17.

² John iii. 15, 17.

of the Messiah. One of their principal doctors, explaining the illustrious prophecy in the 49th chapter of Genesis, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and to him shall the gathering of the people be," says, 'The sense seems to me to be—"The rod of the oppressor shall not depart from Judah, till his Son come, who shall overthrow the nations and break them in pieces, and make war on them all with the edge of the sword."' Another Rabbi says, "When the Messiah comes he shall be as the morning light to Israel, but he shall be as night to the nations of the earth." Such views seem to have been universal among the Jews at the time of our Lord's appearance, as they are still among their unbelieving descendants.

§ 2. *Positively, to save the world.*

Now, says our Lord, the design of the Messiah's mission is not the punishment of the Gentile nations—it is not the punishment of men at all. He comes not to punish, but to save; and to save, not Israelites merely, but men of every country, and people, and tongue, and nation. He is sent "to save the world;" to deliver mankind, Gentiles as well as Jews, from the evils under which they are groaning. He comes, not to bring evils on men, but to remove evils from them—to deliver them from ignorance, and error, and guilt, and depravity, and wretchedness, in all their various forms.

(1.) *That the world may not perish.*

But the design of the Messiah's mission is more particularly described: he comes that mankind "may not perish,"—that they may be delivered from the greatest of all evils. The evils, the removal of which his mission contemplated, are not the external and temporary evils which press on one nation, or even on the whole race, but the spiritual and eternal, and therefore irreparable evils, to which all mankind

are subject. Man, whether Jew or Gentile, is a sinner. He has broken God's law. He has incurred God's displeasure. He is a depraved as well as a guilty creature; "alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him," sunk in ignorance and error, and moral pollution of every description; and because he is guilty and depraved, he is miserable, exposed to numerous external evils, and destitute of all real inward happiness. And this state of things, so far as man's own exertions are concerned, so far as the exertions of the whole created universe are concerned, is irreparable. He must sink deeper and deeper in guilt, and depravity, and misery. If the ordinary course of the Divine government be maintained, he must be "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."¹ His immortality of being must be an immortality of unmixed intolerable wretchedness. To deliver *men*, not men of one particular nation, but men of every nation, from this tremendous aggregation of evils, was the design of the Messiah's mission.

(2.) *That the world may have eternal life.*

But mere deliverance does not form the sole purpose of the mission of the Son of God. He comes that men might have everlasting life. "Life," though not directly signifying enjoyment, according to the Hebrew idiom, conveys more strongly than any other word the idea of happiness, as "death" does that of misery. Everlasting life is of course ever-during happiness. The happiness of a being like man, consists in the Divine favour, and image, and fellowship; in knowing God, in loving God, in being loved by God, in knowing that we are loved by God, in venerating God, trusting in God; having our mind conformed to his mind, our wishes subjected to his pleasure, thinking along with him, willing along with him, choosing what he chooses,

¹ 2 Thess. i. 9.

seeking and finding enjoyment in what he finds enjoyment. This is life. This is happiness. And the never-ending continuance of this is everlasting life. To obtain this kind of happiness for men, for men of every nation under heaven, and to secure the permanent enjoyment of it during the whole eternity of their being, this is the great and glorious object of the divinely commissioned God-man—the Messiah.

In these most important points, this design differed from what the Jews considered as the design of the Messiah's mission. Punishment was not at all the object of the Messiah's coming. The deliverance which he came to effect was not secular, but spiritual; and it was intended, not for the nation of the Jews exclusively, but for mankind generally. The object of his mission was purely merciful. His salvation had a direct reference to the soul and eternity; and as this salvation was universally needed, so it was intended for mankind "of every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation."

III.—OF THE MEANS BY WHICH THE DESIGN OF THE MESSIAH'S MISSION IS TO BE ACCOMPLISHED:—FIGURATIVELY, BY HIS BEING LIFTED UP AS MOSES LIFTED UP THE SERPENT IN THE WILDERNESS; LITERALLY, BY HIS BEING GIVEN BY GOD FOR AND TO MANKIND.

We now proceed to attend to the grand means by which this benevolent design of the Messiah's mission was accomplished. The Son of man is "to be lifted up, as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness."¹ "God gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life."²

¹ John iii. 14, 16.

² Neander and many other good interpreters, think that Christ's words end at verse 16, and that what follows is the illustrative statement of the evangelist. The decision of this question has no bearing on the interpretation of the passage.

Here, as in the former case, the truth is exhibited in opposition to the false views generally entertained by the Jews. They expected that the Messiah was to accomplish the deliverance of Israel, and the destruction of the nations, by being exalted or "lifted up:" elevated first to the throne of David his Father, and then to the throne of the world. 'Now,' says our Lord, 'Messiah shall be lifted up; but he shall be lifted up in a very different way from what you expect. He shall be lifted up, not as David or Solomon was, to the throne of Israel, but "as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness." There is a striking analogy between the way in which the Messiah shall obtain spiritual and eternal salvation for mankind, and the way in which the serpent-stung Israelites in the wilderness were cured of the otherwise incurable distemper which they had brought on themselves by their unbelief and disobedience.'¹

What we are to understand by the Messiah's being "lifted up as the brazen serpent in the wilderness," we need be at no loss to discover. "And I," said our Lord on another occasion, "and I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." "This," says the evangelist, in an explanatory note, "This he said, signifying what death he should die."² The salvation of mankind is to be obtained by the Messiah's dying an accursed death, dying as the victim for human transgressions; and by his being exhibited, held up, as the slain victim for human transgressions; that is, by the truth respecting his vicarious and expiatory sufferings being made known to men. Oh how different was this from anything Nicodemus looked for! He probably expected, with most of his countrymen, that the Messiah was to "abide for ever," was not to die at all. How must he have been astonished, if he understood our Lord's words, to be told that the Messiah was not only to die, but to die the death of a felonious slave.

¹ Numb. xxi. 4-9.

² John xii. 32, 33.

Let us, however, look a little more closely into this mystery of Divine wisdom and mercy : Mankind are to be saved by the divine incarnate Saviour, suffering and dying as a victim for sin—dying on the cross. The same idea that is suggested by the expression : “The Son of man must be lifted up as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,” is conveyed by the words, “God gave his Son.” Some interpreters consider these words as equivalent to, God graciously appointed his Son to be the saviour of the world. In that case, however, it would have been said that he gave him to the world, not merely he gave him. It is plainly parallel to, “The Son of man must be lifted up.” The lifting up of the Son of man, and the giving of the Son of God, being but different descriptions of the same great event.

The meaning of the phrase is best illustrated by parallel passages :—“I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread he shall live for ever : and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”¹ “And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body, which is given for you : this do in remembrance of me.”² “Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.”³ “If we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead ; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”⁴ “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things ?”⁵ “Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time.”⁶ “Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.”⁷

¹ John vi. 51.² Luke xxii. 19.³ Gal. i. 4.⁴ Rom. iv. 24, 25.⁵ Rom. viii. 32.⁶ 1 Tim. ii. 6.⁷ Titus ii. 14.

The meaning of the words, God gave his Son, then, is, ‘God devoted his Son to death, as a victim for the sins of men;’ and the first truth with regard to the manner in which the benevolent design of the Messiah’s mission was to be gained, taught us here by our Lord is, that it was to be the result of his submitting to death, as the victim for the sins of mankind.

This, though not revealed so as to be generally, if at all, understood till the prediction was accomplished, is, now that the light of fulfilment has shone upon them, the obvious meaning of the following ancient oracles, which must have been very mysterious to the saints under a former dispensation, and into the meaning of which, even the prophets themselves would find it necessary to “search diligently.” “God made to meet on the head of his righteous servant the iniquities of us all, and exaction was made, and he became answerable; and he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; and the chastisement of our peace was on him, and he made his soul an offering for sin; and he bare the sins of many.” “The Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself.”¹

The same doctrine is often taught by our Lord’s apostles, and is, indeed, the grand peculiarity of the christian faith:—“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.” “He redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse in our room, as it is written, ‘cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.’” “He bare our sins in his own body on the tree.” “He gave himself for us a sacrifice and an offering, that he might bring us to God.” “In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of God’s grace.” “He hath reconciled us in the body of his flesh through death.”²

There is another important truth respecting the means by which the benevolent design of the Messiah’s mission was to

¹ Isa. liii. 5. 6. Dan. ix. 26.

² 1 Cor. xv. 3. Gal. iii. 13. 1 Pet. ii. 24. Eph. v. 25; i. 7. Col. i. 21, 22.

be accomplished, conveyed by the words of our Lord :—"The Son of Man must be lifted up, as the serpent was lifted up in the wilderness." The brazen serpent was not only lifted up on a pole, but exhibited, that all the Israelites might look at it and be healed. In like manner the Son of Man must not only be lifted up on the cross, but he must be exhibited, as lifted up on the cross, that all men may believe in him and be saved.² The knowledge and belief of the truth, with respect to the atonement, is in ordinary circumstances as necessary to the accomplishment of the design of the Messiah's mission, in the case of individuals, as the atonement itself, and hence the truth about the atonement must be published to all nations.

Here, as in the former case, "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." "By his knowledge, shall my righteous servant justify many." "Look unto me all ye ends of the earth, and be ye saved." "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced."

Here, too, the apostolic testimony concurs with the declaration of the ancient prophets :—"The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation." "We preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness; but unto them who are called, whether Jew or Greek, the power of God, and the wisdom of God." "I am determined to know nothing among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."³ These are the grand means by which the benevolent design of our Lord's mission, the salvation of mankind, was to be accomplished.

There is a peculiarity in our Lord's language on this subject, that deserves to be noticed before we conclude. He does not say the Son of Man *shall* be lifted up, but "the Son

¹ "Exaltari" significat collocari in loco edito et excelso, ut omnium aspectui pateat: id factum est Evangelii prædicatione.—CALVIN in loc.

² Isa. liii. 11; xlv. 22. Zech. xii. 10.

³ Rom. i. 16. 1 Cor. i. 23; ii. 2. Gal. vi. 14.

of Man *must* be lifted up." It is becoming or necessary that the Son of Man be lifted up, in order to the gaining of these ends. Some would refer this to the necessity of the death of Christ for the fulfilment of Old Testament predictions. But there is certainly more in it than this. The expiation of sin was necessary in order to its pardon, the death of the incarnate Son was necessary in order to this expiation, the faith of the truth with regard to this expiatory death is necessary, in order to our participation in the salvation procured by it, and the exhibition of Christ crucified, in other words, the preaching of the Gospel, is necessary in order to this faith. This we shall have an opportunity of showing more at length by and by.

IV.—OF THE MANNER OF OBTAINING THE BLESSINGS PROCURED BY THE MESSIAH : FIGURATIVELY, BY LOOKING AT HIM ; LITERALLY, BY BELIEVING IN HIM.

Let us proceed, now, to consider our Lord's statement, respecting the manner in which individuals are to obtain a personal interest in the blessings procured by the Messiah. That is contained in these words, "Whosoever believeth in him¹ shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life. He that believeth is not condemned."²

¹ "Diserte exprimere voluit, quamvis ad mortem videamur nati, certam tamen offerri liberationem in Christi fide, ita mortem quæ alioqui nobis imminet minime timendam esse. Et universalem notam apposuit, tum ut promiscue omnes ad vitæ participationem invitet, tum ut precipitat excusationem incredulæ. Eodem etiam pertinet nomen MUNDI quo prius usus est. Tametsi enim in mundo nihil reperietur Dei favore dignum, se tamen toti mundo propitium ostendit, quum sine exceptione omnes ad fidem Christi vocat, quæ nihil aliud est quam ingressus in vitam."—CALVIN in loc. "He intended expressly to state that, though we appear to have been born to death, undoubted deliverance is offered to us by the faith of Christ; and, therefore, that we ought not to fear death, which otherwise hangs over us. And he has employed the universal term 'whosoever,' both to invite all indiscriminately to partake of life, and to cut off every excuse from unbelievers. Such is also the import of the word 'world' which he formerly used; for, though nothing will be found in 'the world' that is worthy of the favour of God, yet he shows himself to be reconciled to the whole world, when he invites all men, without exception, to the faith of Christ, which is nothing else than an entrance into life."—*Rev. W. Pringle's Translation.*

² John iii. 15, 16, 18.

The Jews expected that, on the part of their nation, nothing was necessary to secure a share in the blessings of the Messiah's kingdom, beyond their descent from Abraham ; and that in order to any of the Gentiles participating with them in these blessings, they must submit to the Messiah's conquering arms, and become proselytes to the Jewish religion. In opposition to these false views, our Lord states, that it was only by believing in him, the Messiah, as "lifted up," as "given by the Father," that any Jew could become a partaker of the blessings of his salvation, and that every Gentile who should thus believe in him, should become a partaker of these blessings.

The allusion to the lifting up of the serpent in the wilderness, seems intended to illustrate not only the means by which the Messiah was to obtain salvation for men ; but also the manner in which men, as individuals, were to be interested in that salvation. The analogical illustration, when fully brought out, seems to be this : 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that whosoever of the diseased Israelites looked at it might not die but live, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever of the ruined race of man believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life.' Looking at the brazen serpent, may have appeared to the Israelites a paradoxical cure for the serpent's bite, and such a paradox does the salvation of men, through faith in a suffering Messiah, appear even to the wisest of men untaught by the Spirit.

There is no difficulty in apprehending the meaning of the statement, Every serpent-stung Israelite, who looked on the elevated brazen serpent, was healed ; and there should be as little difficulty in apprehending the meaning of the statement, 'Every sinner who believes in the Messiah, as lifted up, shall be saved.' We all know what it is to *look*, and we all know, at least we all may know, what it is to *believe*.

"To believe," when used in reference to a person, is to

give credit to him, to count true what he says. To believe, when used in reference to a statement, is to give credit to it, to reckon it true. It has been supposed by some, that there is an important distinction between believing a person, and believing in a person—believing a thing, and believing in that thing; but a careful attention to the use of the phrases in Scripture, will lead to a different conclusion. To believe *in* Moses, is either to believe that there was such a person as Moses, and that what is recorded of him in the Bible is true; or to believe what Moses, as a divine messenger, has revealed; to believe in a future state, is just to believe that there is a future state. To believe in the Son of Man lifted up, to believe in the only begotten Son of God sent and given by the Father, is just to count true what is stated to us in the Gospel, respecting the only Begotten of God being devoted to death as a victim for the transgressions of men, according to the most benignant appointment of his divine Father.¹

The statement of our Lord, then, is, ‘That it is by believing the truth on this subject that men obtain the blessings of his salvation.’ This is one of the grand peculiarities of the christian method of salvation, and it is very frequently brought before our minds in the New Testament. I will quote a few passages where it is very distinctly taught, that it is by believing that men obtain possession of the blessings of the christian salvation. “He that believeth on the Son”—that is, who has received his testimony—“hath everlasting life.”² “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.”³ “I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; he that believeth on me shall never thirst.”⁴ “It is the will of Him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life.”⁵ “These are written,

¹ See Dr Stewart’s “Hints on the Nature and Influence of Faith.”

² John iii. 36.

³ John v. 24.

⁴ John vi. 35.

⁵ John vi. 40.

that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God : and that believing ye might have life through his name.”¹ “ Be it known unto you, therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins : and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which they could not have been justified by the law of Moses.”² “ To him gave all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him should receive the remission of sins.”³ “ What must I do to be saved ? Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.”⁴ “ The righteousness of God ”—that is, the Divine method of justification—“ is upon,” takes effect on, “ all them that believe.”⁵ “ By grace are ye saved through faith.”⁶

Every one, then, who believes the truth respecting Jesus Christ, God’s Son, dying as a victim for the sins of mankind, is interested in the salvation which he has procured for men. He is no longer in a state of condemnation ; he receives the remission of his sins ; he shall never come into condemnation ; he has peace and joy in believing ; his heart is purified by believing ; he is sanctified by faith which is in Christ ; and not turning back by unbelief unto perdition, he believes to the salvation of the soul, which he in due time receives as the end of his believing.

The connection between the faith of the Gospel, and the enjoyment of the christian salvation, is thus very clearly stated in Scripture ; but clearly as it is stated, it is very generally misapprehended. Men think of this faith of the Gospel as some difficult work which must be performed by them, to give them a claim on God for the blessings of salvation, instead of thinking of it as that which, in the very nature of things, is necessary in order to their possessing these blessings. That conformity of mind and heart to God ; that inward peace, and joyful hope in which the christian salvation, so far as it can be enjoyed in the pre-

¹ John xx. 31.² Acts xiii. 38, 39.³ Acts x. 43.⁴ Acts xvi. 30, 31.⁵ Rom. iii. 22.⁶ Rom. x. 6-9. Eph. ii. 8.

sent world, chiefly consists, cannot, from the very nature of the case, be obtained, but by the faith of the Gospel; and, on the other hand, the faith of the Gospel cannot exist without conveying these blessings into the heart.

It is not on account of our faith that God saves us: it is through means of our faith. Our believing, and our being saved, are not to be considered so distinct, as that the first must be finished before the other can be enjoyed. It is in believing that we are saved; and the measure of our enjoyment of the christian salvation depends on the extent of our knowledge, and the firmness of our faith of the Gospel.

The blessings of salvation are thus freely presented to all to whom the Gospel comes; and nothing is necessary to secure participation in these blessings, but the faith of the truth; and that is necessary, not as a meritorious condition, but as an indispensable means. It is just as if a rich feast were presented to a famishing multitude, and it were said, He that eats of this feast shall be relieved from the pangs of hunger, and shall be refreshed and strengthened. The eating is obviously not the meritorious condition; but it is, from the nature of things, the indispensable means of relief from hunger and exhaustion, and of the enjoyment of the refreshing and invigorating effects of the prepared viands. Many seem to think that the declaration, that whosoever believes shall be saved, is a kind of limitation of the gospel offer. But it is just such a limitation as that which we have referred to, 'Whosoever eats shall be satisfied.' To say, that whosoever believeth shall be saved, is just to say, that the guiltiest of the guilty, and the vilest of the vile, is welcome to salvation, and shall assuredly obtain salvation, if he will but receive it in the only way in which, from the nature of the case, it can be received—in the faith of the truth respecting Jesus Christ, the incarnate only begotten Son of God, as the Saviour, the only Saviour, the all-sufficient Saviour.

This is a most important truth; and it derives striking

illustration from the comparison between the manner in which the serpent-stung Israelites were cured, and the way in which sin-ruined men are saved. "Every one bitten," says Jehovah, "Every one bitten, who looks on the brazen serpent, shall live;" and the sacred historian informs us, that "if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived." However frequently he had been bitten by the serpents, however far advanced the disease was in its progress towards a fatal issue, if he looked to the brazen serpent he recovered. In like manner, however guilty, however depraved, however wretched; however numerous, however aggravated, may have been his violations of the Divine law, whosoever believes the plain, well-accredited testimony of God respecting full salvation through the death of the Just One in the room of the unjust, "shall not perish, but have everlasting life." There is no exception. The vilest miscreant on the face of the earth, the most degraded, and despised, and miserable of mankind, believing in Christ, shall be "saved in Him with an everlasting salvation."

No holy qualification is required to warrant the sinner to apply to the Saviour. It is because he is guilty and miserable, that the salvation is provided. The more guilty, the more miserable, he is obviously the more necessitous; and he is assuredly not the less welcome. Desert of anything but destruction is here out of the question altogether. He who understands and believes the Gospel, must see with equal clearness, that any just claim of merit on the blessings of salvation, on the part of the sinner, is impossible, and that it is unnecessary. The invitation is, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." The promise, "Him that cometh to me, I will in no wise cast out."¹

No sin but the sin of unbelief bars the sinner's way to the Saviour. Even the sin against the Holy Ghost is rather

¹ Rev. xxii. 17. John vi. 37.

an apparent than a real exception. If the sinner who hears the Gospel is condemned, it is "because he will not believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

The efficacy of this method of obtaining a personal interest in the blessings of the christian salvation, has been tried in apparently very desperate cases. Paul was a blasphemer, a persecutor, a first-rate sinner; but through the belief of the faithful saying, Paul obtained salvation.¹ The Corinthian Christians had some of them been absolute monsters of wickedness; but they were "washed, they were sanctified, they were justified through the name of our Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Instances of the efficacy of the faith of the truth in saving sinners, happily are not wanting in our own day; and it will, till the conclusion of the present order of things, be a glorious truth, receiving constantly new accessions of illustration and evidence, that whosoever believeth in Christ Jesus crucified, shall not perish, but have everlasting life.

The having long neglected, or even the having despised, this only means of salvation, does not bar the ungrateful criminal from now obtaining the saving of his soul through believing. It is possible, that some of the Israelites, when they heard of the plan of cure, through the elevation of the brazen serpent, made light of it, hoping for a recovery by the use of ordinary means, and cherishing infidel doubts as to the possibility of their obtaining any good from looking at a brazen serpent; if any of these, finding the disease gaining on them, raised a believing eye to the divinely erected standard of salvation, as the only means of escaping death, we have no reason to doubt but that the ordinary healing influence would have gone forth. And so it is here. However long men have continued in unbelief, and impenitence, and sin, however "stout-hearted" they are, and however "far from righteousness," still it is "the accepted time," still it is "the day of

¹ 1 Tim. i. 13-16. 1 Cor. vi. 9-11.

salvation ;” and we proclaim to him who has oftenest turned a deaf ear to the voice of mercy, “to-day, after so long a time, if thou wilt hear his voice, harden not thy heart.” “Believe” now “in the Lord Jesus, and thou shalt be saved.” For it is still true, “Whosoever believeth in him shall not perish, but have everlasting life.”¹

V.—OF THE PRIMARY SOURCE OF THIS ECONOMY OF SALVATION, THE LOVE OF GOD TO THE WORLD.

Let us now proceed to consider the primary source of this economy of salvation, as stated by our Lord. The love of God—the love of God to the world. “God so loved the world.”²

The advocates for the doctrine of the atonement, the doctrine that the death of the incarnate Only Begotten of God, as the victim for the sins of men, was necessary in order to the Divine mercy manifesting itself to sinners in the communication of pardon and salvation, consistently with the righteousness of his character and law ; the advocates of this doctrine, have often been accused of holding that the interposition of the divine Son was necessary to produce in the bosom of his divine Father, a disposition to pity, and to save, man ; and, as it has been forcibly put, “that the compassion of God rather than the souls of men, was the purchase made by the incarnate Son, when he laid down his life as a ransom.” It has been said that they represent the Divinity, as a being of resentments so fierce that nothing could mitigate them, but the tears and prayers, the blood and death, of his own Son.

It must be acknowledged, that the doctrine of the atonement has not always been taught in “the words which become sound doctrine,” and that language has sometimes been employed on the subject, by good men,

¹ Heb. iv. 7. Acts xvi. 31.

² John iii. 16.—“*Primam salutis nostrae causam et quasi fontem aperit Christus.*”—CALVIN.

which seemed to intimate rather that Christ died, in order that God might be induced to pity and save man, than that he died, because God pitied man, and was determined to save him.

The doctrine of the atonement, as taught in Scripture, however, lays no foundation for such conclusions. "God," according to its declarations, "is love," perfect in benignity, "rich in mercy." In forming conceptions on this subject, when we err, it is by defect, not by excess. Our ideas fall beneath, instead of rising above, the truth.

There was, there could be, no discordance among the persons of the Godhead, in reference to the salvation of man. The will of the Godhead is, and necessarily must be, one. We are not for a moment to suppose, that the Father and the Spirit were disinclined to the salvation of man; and that the Son became incarnate, and suffered, and died, to induce them to comply with his disposition to show favour to the guilty and ruined race. The wondrous economy of redemption, is the fruit of that sovereign benignity which equally belongs to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. In that economy, the Father sustains the majesty of Divinity. All is represented as originating in him. But his holiness, is the holiness of the Divinity; his justice, the justice of the Divinity; his love, the love of the Divinity.

Christ did not die that God might love man, he died because God loved man. "God commendeth his love to us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love; not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."¹ The atonement is thus not the cause, but the effect, of the love of God. It is the wonder-

¹ Rom. v. 8. 1 John iv. 9, 10.

ful expedient devised by infinite wisdom, to render the manifestation of sovereign kindness to a guilty race, not merely consistent with, but gloriously illustrative of, the righteousness of the Divine character, as displayed both in the requisitions and sanctions of that holy law which man had violated.

That law is not an arbitrary institution. It is simply the embodiment of those principles which are necessary to the happiness of intelligent, responsible beings, while they continue what they are, and God continues what he is. That law originates not in sovereignty, but in that union of perfect wisdom, holiness, and benignity, which forms the moral character of God, and to uphold that law, is a necessity of his nature; for it is just to do what the cause of truth, righteousness, and benignity requires. This law had been violated by man. The consequence was, man became liable to the dreadful consequences of transgression. He had sinned, and he deserved to die. The hopeless, the everlasting, destruction of the sinner, must have seemed to every created mind the necessary result of this state of things. But "God who is rich in mercy," and infinite in wisdom, devised and executed a plan, by which the honour of the law might be vindicated, and yet the violators of that law pardoned and saved; by which the evil of sin might be exhibited to the intelligent universe in a light far stronger, than if the whole race of man had perished for ever; and yet an innumerable multitude of that self-ruined race be rescued from destruction, and "saved with an everlasting salvation."

The only begotten Son, in glad compliance with the merciful appointment of his Father, having taken the place of the guilty; and in their nature, and in their room, yielded a perfect obedience, in circumstances of the greatest temptation and difficulty, to that law which they have violated, thus showing the reasonableness and excellence of all its requisitions; and submitted in their room to such sufferings as, in

the estimation of infinite wisdom and righteousness, more signally honoured the sanctionary part of the divine law, than the everlasting punishment of sinful men could have done :—" God hath set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believes in Jesus ;" " a just God, and a Saviour." ¹

Having thus endeavoured to show that the atonement of Christ is not the procuring cause of God's love to sinners, but the means which God in his wisdom devised for rendering the display of his love consistent with his righteousness, I go on to illustrate, somewhat more particularly, the great truth upon which, in this part of the subject, I wish to fix your attention ; that the whole of that wondrous economy of salvation unfolded by our Lord, proceeds from the love of God, from the love of God to the world.

§ 1. *The love of God, the origin of the plan of salvation.*

We may begin with asking in what could the plan of salvation originate but in love, pure sovereign benignity ? Contemplate the attributes and relations of God, and then contemplate the character and circumstances of man. Look first at the bestower, and then look at the recipients of its blessings, and say, from what source they could flow but from spontaneous kindness ?

Look upwards to Divinity and say, if anything but sovereign kindness could have actuated him in devising and executing the plan of human salvation ? It could not be strict justice that influenced him : that would have led to the infliction of punishment, not the conferring of benefits ; that would have led to man's destruction, not his salvation. Selfish considerations are, from the absolute independence of the Divine Being, entirely out of the question. The sources of the Divine happiness, like the sources of

¹ Rom. iii. 25, 26. Isa. xlv. 21.

the Divine excellence, are in the Divine nature. No creature can either advance or diminish the happiness of God. Our gratitude, obedience, and praise for the benefits of salvation, cannot increase his felicity. "Our goodness extendeth not to him." "Can a man be profitable to God, as he who is wise is profitable to himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous; or is it gain to to him that thou makest thy way perfect?"¹ And if this wondrous plan of salvation could not originate in a selfish desire for our services and praises, it could as little originate in a selfish fear of our enmity, reproaches, or rebellious attempts against his government. The very idea is as absurd as it is blasphemous. "Will he reprove thee, for fear of thee? Thy wickedness may hurt a man as thou art; but if thou sinnest what doest thou against him; or if thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou to him?"² He can easily render all the attempts which men and devils can make against his government, but so many occasions for the display of his wisdom, his power, and his righteousness. Had the whole sinning race of man been consigned to endless perdition, would he not have gathered through eternity a revenue of praise from their sufferings, as illustrations of his immaculate holiness, his inflexible justice, his inviolable faithfulness, without any disparagement of his benignity, which would indeed have been manifested in their interminable sufferings, as in those of the "angels who kept not their first estate,"³ such inflictions being direct means of upholding that law, which is as necessary to the happiness of his intelligent creatures, as it is to the honour of his character, or the stability of his throne?

When we thus look upward to God, the giver of the blessings of the christian salvation, we are constrained to say, Nothing but love could influence him in bestowing them. And when we direct our thoughts to the recipients

¹ Ps. xvi. 2. Job. xxii. 2, 3.

² Job xxxv. 5-8.

³ Jude 6.

of these benefits, we are conducted by a very short process of reasoning to the same conclusion. There is nothing in the situation or character of man which can lead us to trace blessings conferred on him to anything but pure benignity.

He is a creature, and therefore, strictly speaking, he can have no claim on God. It was of God's free sovereign pleasure to create him, or not to create him; and when he created him, it was of his sovereign pleasure that he made him a living, thinking, immortal being, rather than an irrational brute, or an inanimate clod. As a creature, man, in common with all creatures, must be a pensioner on Divine bounty for every blessing. But though in no case could man have had a claim on God, had he continued what God made him, an innocent, a holy being, we may safely affirm that the equity as well as the benignity of God, would have secured for him everything necessary to true and permanent happiness.

But man is a sinner. He is guilty of innumerable violations of that holy law, one transgression of which deserves everlasting destruction; and he is not, as the economy of grace finds him, a penitent sinner. No, he is a hardened rebel, "going on in his trespasses," receding farther and farther from God. When God looks down from heaven on the children of men, what does he see? "They have all gone aside, they have altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one."¹

What could induce God to spare, what could induce him to save, such beings? Holiness, justice, wisdom, had they not in the Divine nature been conjoined with infinite benignity, would have suggested anything rather than "thoughts of good" towards such a polluted, rebellious, worse than useless, mischievous, class of creatures; a set of beings whom a mere act of will could have annihilated, or punished with "everlasting destruction." What but love,

¹ Psal. xiv. 2, 3.

pure sovereign compassion, could have said, "Deliver these from going down to the pit, I have found a ransom." ¹

As it is thus plain, that nothing but love could have been the source of the economy of human salvation, so it is equally evident, that that love must have had "a height and a depth, a length and a breadth," that exceeds the computing powers of created intelligences. Well may we with the apostle stand in adoring wonder and exclaim, "Behold what manner of love!" "Herein,"—"herein" indeed—"is love;" ² as if all the other displays of Divine benignity were unworthy of regard when compared with this.

There are two ways by which we naturally measure the strength of a benevolent affection. The intrinsic value of the benefits bestowed on the objects of it, and the expense, labour, and suffering, at which these benefits are obtained for them. Let us apply, or rather attempt to apply, these measures to the case before us, and we shall be obliged to confess, that this love "passes knowledge."

The salvation which is by Christ, includes deliverance from numerous, varied, immense, unending evils. It is deliverance from "perishing." It includes also restoration to numerous, varied, immense, unending blessings. It is the enjoyment of "eternal life." It is deliverance from evil, moral and physical, in all its forms, and in all its degrees, for ever and ever, and the possession of a happiness suited to, and filling to an overflow, all our capacities of enjoyment during the whole eternity of our being. When we think of the number, and variety, and value of the heavenly and spiritual blessings bestowed on us, we must acknowledge that it is "great love" wherewith God loves us; when we reflect on the inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, we are constrained to say, the mercy which bequeathes it, is "abundant mercy." This measure we can but very inadequately apply. Only the hopelessly lost know what the salvation of

¹ Joh xxxiii. 24.

² 1 John iii. i.; iv. 10.

Christ delivers from. Only the blessed in heaven know what the salvation of Christ exalts to. Even they know these things imperfectly. Eternity will be ever disclosing new horrors in the one, new glories in the other.

If we attempt to apply the second principle, we soon arrive at the same result. To obtain these blessings, the Son of God must become incarnate, and obey, and suffer, and die. "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up in our room as the victim for our transgressions. He made him who knew no sin, a sin-offering in our room. He made to meet on him the iniquities of us all. It pleased the Lord to bruise him; and he was wounded for our iniquities, bruised for our transgressions, and the chastisement of our peace was on him. He who was in the form of God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal with God, made himself of no reputation, took on him the form of a servant, and humbled himself and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross."¹ If it was a strong proof of the regard of Abraham to God, that he did not withhold his son, his only son, from him, how shall we estimate the love of God to a lost world, which led him to give his own, his only begotten, his beloved Son, that he might give himself, a sacrifice and an offering for man's salvation!

§ 2. *The love of God to the world the origin of the plan of salvation.*

There is another idea to which I wish for a little to turn your attention on this part of the subject. The love in which the economy of salvation originates, is love to the world. "God so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son." The term "world," is here just equivalent to mankind. It seems to be used by our Lord with a reference to the very limited and exclusive views of the Jews. They thought God loved them, and hated all the other nations of mankind. These were their own feelings, and they foolishly

¹ Rom. viii. 32. 2 Cor. v. 21. Isa. liii. 5, 6. Phil. ii. 6-8.

thought that God was altogether such an one as themselves. They accordingly expected that the Messiah was to come to deliver Israel, and to punish and destroy the other nations of the earth. But "God's ways were not their ways, nor his thoughts their thoughts. As the heavens are high above the earth, so were his ways above their ways, and his thoughts above their thoughts."¹

Some have supposed that the word "world" here, is descriptive, not of mankind generally, but of the whole of a particular class, that portion of mankind who, according to the Divine purpose of mercy, shall ultimately become partakers of the salvation of Christ. But this is to give to the term a meaning altogether unwarranted by the usage of Scripture. There can be no doubt in the mind of a person who understands the doctrine of personal election, that those who are actually saved, are the objects of a special love on the part of God ; and that the oblation of the Saviour had a special design in reference to them. But there can be as little doubt, that the atonement of Christ has a general reference to mankind at large ; and that it was intended as a display of love on the part of God to our guilty race. Not merely was the atonement offered by Christ Jesus sufficient for the salvation of the whole world, but it was intended and fitted to remove out of the way of the salvation of sinners generally, every bar which the perfections of the Divine moral character, and the principles of the Divine moral government, presented. Without that atonement, no sinner could have been pardoned in consistency with justice. In consequence of that atonement, every sinner may be, and if he believe in Jesus, certainly shall be, pardoned and saved. Through the medium of this atonement, the Divine Being is revealed to sinners, indiscriminately, as gracious and ready to forgive ; and the invitations and promises warranting men to confide in Christ for salvation, are addressed to all, and

¹ Isa lv. 7.

are true and applicable to all without exception or restriction.

The revelation of mercy made in the Gospel, refers to men as sinners, not as elect sinners. Their election, or their non-election, is something of which, when called on to believe the Gospel, they are necessarily entirely ignorant, and with which they have nothing to do. "The kindness and love of God toward man," the divine philanthropy, is revealed. "God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself." He appears in the revelation of mercy as the God who "has no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; who willeth all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." "The grace of God" revealed in the Gospel "brings salvation to all" without exception, who in the faith of the truth will receive it.¹

I am persuaded that the doctrine of personal election is very plainly taught in Scripture; but I am equally persuaded that the minister misunderstands that doctrine who finds it in the least degree hampering him in presenting a full and a free salvation as the gift of God to every one who hears the Gospel; and that the man abuses the doctrine who finds in it anything which operates as a barrier in the way of his receiving, as a sinner, all the blessings of the christian salvation, in the belief of the truth. Indeed, when rightly understood, it can have no such effect. For what is that doctrine, but just in other words—"It is absolutely certain that a vast multitude of the race of man shall be saved through Christ?" And it is as certain, that if any one of those to whom that salvation is offered, remains destitute of it, and perishes eternally, it is entirely owing to his own obstinate refusal of what is freely, honestly, presented to him. The kindness of God, as manifested in the gift of his Son, is kindness to the race of man; and when, as an individual, I credit the kindness of God to man, so strangely displayed, so abundantly proved, I cannot find any reason why I should not depend on this kindness, and expect to be saved even as others.

¹ Tit. iii. 4. 2 Cor. v. 19. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. 1 Tim. ii. 3, 4. Tit. ii. 11.

Whenever a man hesitates about placing his dependence on the mercy of God, because he is not sure whether he be elected or not, he gives clear evidence that he does not yet understand the Gospel. He does not apprehend "the manifestation of the love of God to man." When he sees God in Christ reconciling the world to himself, "he does not need to ask, Is the plan of mercy such as I am warranted to embrace? may I not be among those for whose salvation it does not provide? These, and similar suggestions, which draw away his mind from the voice of God to the speculations of his own mind, are no more regarded." He sees God rich in mercy, ready to forgive; just, and the justifier of the ungodly. He cannot but place his confidence in him. "Jehovah," as it has been happily said, "by the manifestation of what he has done, especially in sending Christ, and delivering him up, the just in the room of the unjust, pleads his own cause with such subduing pathos, that there is no more power of resistance: but the person, who is the object of the demonstration, yields himself up to the authority and glory of the truth."¹ The sinner, thus cordially believing the Gospel, gladly and gratefully receives the Saviour, and trusts "that by the grace of God he shall be saved, even as others."

VI.—OF THE GUILT AND DANGER OF THOSE WHO DO NOT
AVAIL THEMSELVES OF THIS ECONOMY OF SALVATION.

Let us now consider the statement in the text respecting the guilt and the danger of those who will not, by believing the word of the truth of the Gospel, receive the salvation which it reveals and conveys. These are very strikingly stated in the verses now before us:—"He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the con-

¹ Hogg of Alyth—View of the Economy of Grace, pp. 14, 15.

demnation, that light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil.”¹

“He that believeth not,” is a general description which applies to all who, while they have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the meaning and evidence of the revelation of mercy, do not give credit to its declarations, whether this originates in profligacy, inconsideration, or pride, in any of its varieties; whether it take the negative form of merely not believing, or the positive form of discrediting and denying, the Divine testimony. The infidel—the person who rejects the divine authority of the christian revelation, is, no doubt, an unbeliever; and the person, too, who, while he admits that the New Testament is a divine revelation, yet denies its most characteristic doctrines, such as the divinity and atonement of Jesus Christ, and the radical depravity of human nature, and the necessity of divine influence in order to the production, and maintenance and progress, of true holiness in the human heart, is also an unbeliever. But, besides these, there are multitudes who would resent keenly any attempt to class them with infidels and heretics, who yet are, in the scripture sense of the word, unbelievers. Every man to whom “the word of this salvation” comes, who does not really believe, because God has said it, that “He has given to us eternal life, and that life is in his Son;” that “the wages of sin is death, and the gift of God eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord;” he who does not so count this “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation,” as to place his own individual hope of final happiness on the free grace of God thus revealed, and as, under the influence of “the love of God shed abroad in the heart” by the faith of the Gospel, to “present himself to God a living sacrifice;” that person, however correct his speculative views may be as to the evidence, and even as to the substance, of christian truth, is an unbeliever; and with regard to all to whom the appellation un-

¹ John iii. 18-21.

believer can with propriety be applied, it is the declaration of our Lord that they are "condemned already."

These words of our Lord admit of two modes of interpretation, according to the meaning which is considered as belonging to the principal word in the declaration, "condemned." The primary meaning is, to be sentenced to punishment, in opposition to being acquitted or pardoned. Supposing this to be its meaning in the passage before us, our Lord's words convey this important truth, While he who believeth the testimony of God concerning his love to mankind, manifested in his devoting his Son as the victim for their transgressions, "is not condemned," but pardoned and accepted as righteous—justified through believing; he that does not believe is "already," even now, condemned—sentenced to punishment—doomed to destruction. This proposition may be understood as conveying one or other of two closely-connected, yet still distinct ideas: either the unbeliever continues to lie under the sentence of condemnation which he had previously incurred as a violator of the divine law, or the unbeliever subjects himself, by the very act of unbelief, to a new sentence of condemnation. Both these propositions are truths, and important ones.

When the Gospel comes to a man, it finds him already a sinner, doomed by the holy law of God to that death which, under his government, is the "wages of sin." The Gospel presents to the man a full and free pardon; that pardon can, from the nature of the case, be received only in the faith of the truth; and, as a matter of course, the unbeliever continues without it; he remains as he was before it came to him—a condemned sinner.

From what follows, however, we are strongly disposed to think, that, supposing the word "condemn" to refer here to the sentence of condemnation, the reference is not so much to the old condemnation which remains, as to the new condemnation which is incurred. The unbeliever is condemned, not only for what he had done previously to the revelation

of mercy being made known to him, but he is emphatically condemned, because he has rejected this revelation of mercy ; “because he has not believed on the name of the only begotten Son of God ;” trampling, as he does, at once on the authority of God, as manifested in the commandment which he has given to believe on his Son, and on the grace of God, as manifested in his “not sparing his Son,” but giving him for us on the cross, and to us in the Gospel ; not only is he condemned, inasmuch as he continues in condemnation in consequence of his unbelief, but he is condemned, inasmuch as he incurs a new condemnation on account of it.¹

He is condemned “already.”² That may signify, either ‘he is even now condemned ; in not believing, he contracts guilt ; he subjects himself to punishment ;’—or, ‘he is already sentenced to punishment. Not only will he be condemned at last, but the sentence of condemnation is already passed ; and if it be not reversed, the judgment of the last day will only confirm that sentence.’ It may be said, where is the doom of the unbeliever to be found ? we reply, it is to be found in that book, according to which, the sentences of the great day will be regulated. “He that believeth not shall be damned.”³

Proceeding still on the principle that “condemn” means here sentenced to punishment, the 19th verse must be considered as explanatory of the Divine judicial sentence announced in the 18th verse, and a vindication of it from every imputation of undue severity or injustice. “And this is the condemnation, that light has come into the world,

¹ “Henceforward, he who is condemned must not complain of Adam and his inborn sin: “the seed of the woman,” promised by God to “bruise the head of the serpent,” is now come, and has atoned for sin, and taken away condemnation : but he must cry out against himself, for not having accepted and believed in this Christ, the devil’s head-bruise and sin-strangler. If I do not believe the same, sin and condemnation must continue : because he who is to deliver me from it is not taken hold of ; nay, it will be a doubly great and heavy sin and condemnation that I will not believe in the dear Saviour by whom I might be helped, nor accept his redemption.”—LUTHER.

² Præteritum verbi tempus *ἡμαρτινός* posuit, quo melius exprimeret de omnibus incredulis actum esse.—CALVIN.

³ Mark xvi. 16.

and that men have loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." According to this mode of interpretation, "condemnation" is equivalent to 'the cause of condemnation:' this is the reason why the unbeliever is condemned. "Light"—that is, truth, and its evidences—holy benignant truth, calculated to make men wise, and good, and happy—this "has come into the world;" a plain and well accredited revelation has been made of it. It appeared, embodied in the person of the incarnate Son, "God manifested in flesh," the revealer of truth, the author of salvation; and of him, as the image of God, we have an accurate representation "in the word of the truth of the Gospel."

If men, to whom this revelation comes, continue in ignorance, and guilt, and depravity, and misery, it is not because they have not the means of obtaining knowledge and wisdom, the favour, the image, the fellowship of God. These are brought very near them, and pressed on their acceptance. The true account of their conduct is, "they love darkness rather than light;" and it shows that, however miserable they are, and are likely to be, they themselves are the authors of all that misery, by obstinately refusing what the Divine kindness has provided for them; they prefer ignorance to knowledge, error to truth, sin to holiness; and, in effect, misery to happiness.

It is added, as the reason why they act so irrational as well as wicked a part, "because their deeds are evil." "Deeds" here are not to be restricted to external actions, nor are we to suppose that the persons referred to by our Lord are exclusively the openly wicked and notoriously profligate. The word "deeds" is to be interpreted with a reference to that law to which man is subject, which is spiritual, "a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart;" and includes evil desires and affections, as well as what are more properly denominated "deeds." Paul enumerates, among the "works"¹ or deeds of the flesh, "hatred, wrath,

¹ 147a.

envy." "The old man and his *deeds*" is descriptive of the whole frame of habits, whether internal or external, which characterise our fallen unchanged nature. When our Lord says "their deeds are evil," it is equivalent to, 'they are depraved and unholy;' and, consequently, the words are a declaration that all unbelief of the Gospel has a moral cause, and that that cause is evil; that, if men do not believe it, it is not at all because the statements it contains are unintelligible, or the evidence on which they rest defective, but it is because they love sin, and are determined to live in it.¹

Such is the mode in which these words have been ordinarily interpreted, and it must be admitted that the sense thus brought out is coherent and important, perfectly harmonious with the general scheme of doctrine taught in the New Testament, and well-fitted to serve the purpose which our Lord had in view in his discourse to Nicodemus.

At the same time, I am inclined to think that it does not exactly express our Lord's meaning. I apprehend that, throughout the whole discourse, our Lord uses the word "condemn" as equivalent to 'punish.' He employs it as an antithesis, not to 'pardon' or 'acquit,' but to "save." "For God sent his Son into the world, not to *condemn*," that is, not to punish, "the world, but to save the world;" not to inflict evil, but to confer happiness. In the 36th verse, "to be saved," as the certain effect of believing in Christ, is described as "having everlasting life;" and what is here called "judgment" or "condemnation," the effect of unbelief, is described as "having the wrath of God abiding on a person." This variety of signification not unfrequently belongs to the word as employed in the New Testament.² On this principle of interpretation, which, upon the whole, we prefer, our Lord's meaning may be thus expressed: 'He that believeth is not punished; he does not perish; no: he

¹ I earnestly recommend to the reader's perusal, Dr Wardlaw's illustration of these verses, in his able little work, entitled "Man Responsible for his Belief."

² Acts vii. 7. 2 Thess. ii. 12. Heb. xiii. 4. Rev. xvi. 5.

is "saved," "he has everlasting life." By his faith he enters on the enjoyment of the salvation which the Gospel announces. But he who does not believe, he is "punished," "already punished."

Some would interpret the word "already" as equivalent to 'he is as sure of punishment as if he were already punished;' as we say of a man condemned to death, or labouring under an incurable disease, 'he is a dead man.' I rather think the meaning is, 'in not believing the Gospel, he punishes himself.' A state of unbelief is necessarily a state of perdition. He shuts himself out from the enjoyment of true happiness, which is to be obtained by man only in the faith of the truth. It is true that he will be punished more severely by and by; but he is even now punished, "because he does not believe on the name of the only begotten Son of God."

"And this is the condemnation," or rather 'punishment.' In this consists the misery, "Light has come into the world." Light is the emblem of knowledge, in opposition to ignorance; truth in opposition to error; holiness in opposition to depravity; happiness in opposition to misery. "Light has come into the world," is just equivalent to, 'the means of obtaining knowledge, wisdom, pardon, holiness, and happiness have been furnished to men.' But "men loved darkness rather than the light." The unbeliever obstinately refuses to avail himself of these, and punishes himself by excluding himself from the enjoyment of all these blessings. He prefers ignorance to knowledge, error to truth, sin to holiness, and thus, in effect, misery to happiness. Is not such a person "punished already" in the necessary consequences of his wilful unbelief? For it is wilful. The cause is not, that the revelation is too obscure to be understood, too weakly supported to be credited; it is, that "their deeds are evil," the whole frame of their sentiments, and dispositions, and habits, is depraved.

How this operates in preventing men from believing the

Gospel is explained by our Lord in the 20th and 21st verses. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God."

In these verses, our Lord refers, I apprehend, directly to the different reception his Gospel was to meet with from different classes of his countrymen. Such of them as were entirely carnal in their desires and expectations in reference to the Messiah, would reject him and his doctrine. They would not "come to the light lest their deeds should be reproved" or exposed. They would not embrace—nay, they would not even examine—a system which, instead of promising to gratify their fond carnal expectations, required them to relinquish them; and which offered only a holy spiritual happiness, for which they had no relish. They had no desire to be awakened from their dreams; and, therefore, they tried to extinguish the light which threatened to break their repose. On the other hand, those among the Jews who "did truth," that is, whose characters were formed, and whose conduct was guided, by that comparatively obscure revelation of truth which they had received; such men as the apostles, who with the exception of Judas, seem all, however imperfect and incorrect their notions might be, to have been looking for something more in the Messiah than a merely temporal deliverer; who were "Israelites, indeed, in whom there was no guile;" men, whose knowledge and faith were very limited, but who lived under the influence of the will of God, so far as they knew it; such men would gladly hail "the day-spring from on high visiting them," and "come unto the light, that their deeds might be made manifest, that they were wrought in God,"¹ that is, in conformity to God's will. They would readily avail themselves of the means of discovering how far they were right,

¹ It is an ingenious thought of Campbell, that these words were intended as a mild rebuke to Nicodemus for coming "by night."

and of having their whole frame of sentiments and affections brought into a more complete conformity to the Divine will. Such appears to me the meaning and reference of this portion of our Saviour's discourse.

Before concluding, it may serve a good purpose to bring together, in a brief statement, the great truths, whether taught in this passage or elsewhere, respecting the fatal consequences of refusing or neglecting to avail ourselves of the merciful provisions of the divine economy of salvation. They may be all reduced, I think, to the three following : 1st, The unbeliever continues under the sentence of condemnation which he has already incurred by his other violations of the Divine law ; 2d, He excludes himself from the enjoyment of those benefits which can be obtained only by the faith of the truth ; and 3d, He exposes himself to a new and heavier sentence of condemnation on account of his unbelief, which is disobedience to the great commandment of God under the new economy, direct opposition to the favourite purpose of God, if I may use the expression, the salvation of sinners through the mediation of his Son. Let us very briefly illustrate these three remarks :—

1st, The unbeliever continues under the sentence of condemnation which he has already incurred by his other violations of the Divine law. The man called to believe the Gospel is already a sinner. " For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God," *i. e.*, ' have lost the Divine approbation.'¹ The notion of a universal pardon, if, by this, anything else is meant than that, by the atonement of Christ, all bars in the way of the salvation of men, arising from the law or justice of God, are removed, and pardon freely offered to all, is a baseless, and delusive, and ruinous dream. " Whatsoever things the law says, it says to them under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world be brought in guilty before God."² There is

¹ Rom. iii. 23.

² Rom. iii. 19.

but one way of obtaining deliverance from this burden of guilt. Men must believe in Jesus, that they may obtain the forgiveness of sin ;¹ if they do not, their guilt remains. There is no expiation for sin but the atonement of Christ, no saving interest in that atonement but through believing. The unbeliever must continue under the power of guilt, just as the patient under the influence of disease, who refuses to use the only and the effectual remedy. But this is not all.

2d, The unbeliever excludes himself from those benefits which can be obtained only through the atonement of Christ, and can be enjoyed only in the belief of the truth. The believer, "being justified by faith, has peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also, he has access by faith into this grace wherein he stands, and rejoices in hope of the glory of God; and joys in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." His heart is purified through believing. "This is the victory which overcometh the world, even his faith," and he has "joy and peace in believing."² Through the faith of the truth he is conformed to the Divine image, made to think along with God, and will along with God. He thus obtains a permanent source of powerful motive to duty, and of abundant consolation amid suffering. In the faith of the truth, "he has in him a well of living water springing up into everlasting life." Now, from all this, the unbeliever wilfully excludes himself. He cannot, just because he is an unbeliever, participate in these exalted blessings; and he must, just because he is an unbeliever, continue under the pressure of the corresponding evils. Fear, remorse, and all the misery of untamed passions, and unsatisfied desires—those vultures of the mind—must be his portion. But even this is not all.

3d, The unbeliever exposes himself to a new and heavier sentence of condemnation on account of his unbelief. That not to believe a divine revelation—the terms of which are

¹ Gal. ii. 16.

² Rom. v. 1, 11. Acts xv. 9. 1 John v. 4. Rom. xv. 13.

level to our apprehension, and the evidence of which would be satisfactory to our reason, were it carefully and candidly weighed, is criminal, and criminal in a high degree, is just about as evident as any principle in morals can be. That unbelief is a sin, and a great one, involving deep guilt, and exposing to correspondingly severe punishment, is very obviously the doctrine of Scripture. To despise the Divine invitation, to disobey the Divine command, cannot surely be innocent or safe. The following passages of Scripture place in a very strong light the sinfulness of unbelief, and the awful responsibility which it involves. "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment; of sin, because they believe not on me."¹ "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth, and is baptised, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."² "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."³ "He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son."⁴ "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe (because our testimony among you was believed), in that day."⁵

There is no part of the christian system more unpalatable to worldly men than this,—'That if a man, however correct in his manners, however amiable in his temper and character,—do not believe the Gospel, he must perish

¹ John xvi. 8, 9.² 1 John v. 10.³ Mark xvi. 15, 16.⁴ 2 Thess. i. 7-10.⁵ John iii. 36.

everlastingly.' It seems to them a hard saying, and they cannot receive it. But let us look at the case as it really is, and we must be persuaded, that this Divine appointment is in the highest degree reasonable and right. We may borrow an illustration from the case of the Israelites. I can suppose that, among the murmurers against Moses and God, there was a man, very respectable in the ordinary sense of the term, who, on being stung by a serpent, concluded that 'a chance had happened him,' and used the ordinary means of cure; and, on hearing what Moses had done and proclaimed, smiled inwardly at the folly of those who could expect to be cured by looking at a brazen serpent; and determined that he should die sooner than degrade himself by such fanatical folly. Would there have been anything hard in allowing this man to suffer the natural results of his ungodly pride? And yet, if that man had been left to die, it would have been just because he wanted faith. All have sinned. The most amiable and useful man in the world is a sinner. The interests of intelligent creatures, equally with the honour of God, require that sin should not go without a distinct mark of Divine disapprobation. Every sinner deserves to be punished. God has provided, at immense cost, a method for saving sinners. He has given a plain account of this to men, accompanied with satisfactory evidence that that account comes from him. He has so arranged it, as that without the belief of this account, the individual sinner cannot obtain the advantage of this only method of salvation. Is there anything wrong, anything hard, in this? And if, as very often happens, amiable, respectable, worldly men, because in this method of salvation there is something that shocks their prejudices, and is at war with their pride and other propensities, choose to remain ignorant amid the means of information, and harden themselves in unbelief, in the face of evidence,—are they not guilty of impiety in one of its worst forms? and if there is power in the arm of God, can it be more appropriately put forth than against men, who treat the

God of truth as if he were a liar—the all-wise God as if he were a fool,—who trample on Divine condescension, and defy Divine vengeance?

We conclude with again proclaiming the glad tidings, and, in the name of God, calling on all to believe them. “Hear and your souls shall live.” “All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” “For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” “Wisdom crieth without; she uttereth her voice in the streets: She crieth in the chief place of concourse, in the openings of the gates: in the city she uttereth her words, saying, How long, ye simple ones, will ye love simplicity? and the scorers delight in their scorning, and fools hate knowledge? Turn you at my reproof: behold, I will pour out my Spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you. Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded: but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; when your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: They would none of my counsel; they despised all my reproof: Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices. For the turning away of the simple shall slay them, and the prosperity of fools shall destroy them. But whoso hearkeneth unto me shall dwell safely, and shall be quiet from fear of evil.”¹

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18; vi. 2. Prov. i. 20-23.

NOTE A, p. 4.

“Ἡ Βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ.—”*Ανωθεν*. The meaning of βασιλ. τ. θεοῦ, *kingdom of God*, must here be explained. The Jewish theologians regarded the heavenly world of spirits either under the image of a family of God, מַלְאָכֵי אֱלֹהִים, or they considered it under the image of a state;—the angels as princes and citizens, God as the king. Again, the Jewish theologians knew that their external theocracy was designed to represent a royal priesthood and people consecrated to God, Exod. xix. 6. Now, on account of this destination, they regarded their theocracy as an earthly image of that heavenly realm of spirits, and named it מַלְכוּת שָׁמַיִם, *heavenly state*. But as it was obvious that the ancient theocracy did not fully realise this elevated destination, and as the prophets had pointed to the Messianic time as that in which the theocracy should be glorified, and brought nearer to its true state, the Messianic kingdom received, *sensu eminentiori*, the name of מַלְכוּת שְׁמַיָּה. So it is already in Dan. vii. in the Chald. Targum on Isa. xl. 9, in the Medrasch on Schir Haschirim, and in many other places. Synonymous with this term were also the expressions עוֹלָם הָעָתִיד, *higher world*, עוֹלָם הָבָא, *future world*, יְרוּשָׁלַיִם הָעֵלְיוֹנָה, *the Jerusalem above*. All that the christian doctrine permits the Christian to hope concerning his fellowship with Christ in a future life, the Israelite expected from the Messianic kingdom. In this the idea of *an hereafter* was disclosed to them; for the dead were then to rise, in order to participate in it. This meaning of the word, peculiar to the Old Testament, now passed over into the writings of the New Testament; only with such modifications as were consistent with the fact, that the Messianic period had actually commenced with Christ. According to the revelation of the New Testament, we must now distinguish two divisions of the Messianic period; the one, in which it is something that develops itself internally, and the other when it will appear externally visible and glorified, at the end of time. In the one point of view, then βασιλ. τ. θ. is something internally *present*; in the other aspect, it is something externally *future*, though both are essentially the same, and the latter is only the

highest completion of the former. Among the recent writers, Olshausen has apprehended the conception of βασι. τ. οὐρ. in the most spiritual manner, Comm. zum. N. T. Th. I. s. 150. In the most general sense we should translate: The Messianic kingdom; but, at the same time, it will be necessary to keep in view the development given above, in order to be reminded of the different references involved in the expression.—'Ἰδεῖν, according to the Hebrew idiom, as well as γέεσθαι, means *to experience*, Psal. lxxxix. 49; xvi. 10; infra iii. 36; viii. 51, 52, &c. Ἄνωθεν may be the same with οὐρανόθεν, *from heaven*, v. 31; xix. 11. James i. 17. So Orig., Theophyl., Erasm. Philo also, de Gig. ed. Fr. p. 285, uses the expression ἄνωθεν φιλοσοφεῖν to designate a heavenly mode of thought, for which Mangey unnecessarily wishes to substitute ἀνόθως. The ἐκ θεοῦ γενν, i. 13, might then be compared with it. But it is better in the sense of πάλιν, for so Nicodemus understood it, v. 4, since δεύτερον stands there in the place of it; and in regard to this point simply, Christ could not have been misunderstood by Nicodemus, for the conversation was carried on in the Aramaean language, in which there could be no word of a double meaning used; this manner of apprehending it, is also confirmed by the Syriac and Coptic translations, by the Vulgate, and by almost all modern interpreters. The phrase, then, corresponds to ἀναγέννησις and παλιγγενεσία, 1 Pet. i. 3; Tit. iii. 5. Birth gives a new existence. Christ therefore means to say: he who wishes to enter into the spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, must receive a new existence, a new principle of life."—THOLUCK.

NOTE B, p. 6.

"Many, like Calvin, take *spirit* as epexegetical of *water*: aquae spirituales non fluviales, and appeal to the hendiadys, Matt. iii. 11. So also in Winer, Ex. Stud. p. 140. Others, like Grot. and Teller, understand a hendiadys reversed: spiritus aquae instar emundans. Some, as Cocc. and Lampe, understand by ὕδωρ the obedientia pura of Christ. Zuinglius: intelligit per spiritum coelestem operationem spiritus Dei; per aquam cogni-

tionem claritatem, lucem coelestem. Others, like Beza, Beausobre, and Herder, supposed that Christ referred to the then well known rite of John's baptism, or that of proselytes, and, as Beaus. says, it may be translated without hesitation: Si quelq'un n'est né non seulement de l'eau, mais aussi de l'esprit, 'If any one is not born, not only of water, but also of the Spirit.' Some also think of a mystical, ethereal element—the higher water—out of which the spiritual body of man is formed, so Schubert (in v. Meyer Blätter für h. Wahrh. II. 76. Ueber einige Bed. des Wortes Wasser in der Schrift,) and also the Ev. Schullehrerb. Heisen in a Dissert. von 1727, shows that the Rabbins spoke of a heavenly water in a mystical sense, and he believes that allusion is here made to the history of creation, where *the Spirit moved upon the face of the waters*. Finally, according to Erasm. *πνεῦμα* is to be understood of the air; Christ places figuratively the two purest spiritual elements in opposition to the gross earthly birth. The view of Olshausen is peculiar: 'The ideas of birth and creation are very nearly allied; as in creation now water appears as the passive material and Spirit as the forming power, so also in the *γεννηθῆναι ἐξ ὕδατος κ. πν.*, *being born of water, &c.*, the Spirit is the creative power of regeneration, whilst water is the feminine principle, in repentance the purified element of the soul, which becomes as it were the mother of the new man. . . . The interpretation, then, which refers this to baptism, is entirely correct, only it must be understood as intimating, not the *sacrament* but the *idea* of baptism.'"—THOLUCK. This view of Olshausen is strangely mystical..

NOTE C, p. 6.

"This passage is not without difficulty, and different interpretations of it have been given, which I shall briefly notice. They are principally three. By 'flesh,' most interpreters understand natural depravity; and by 'spirit,' the Holy Spirit in the first place; and in the second place, that gracious disposition of mind which is implanted by the Spirit. According to this view, the meaning is as follows: he that is born of depraved men is him-

self depraved ; but he that is born of the Divine Spirit, is of a divine disposition ; as if the sentence had run thus: *ὁ γεγεννημένος ἐκ τῆς σαρκὸς, σαρκικὸς ἐστὶ· καὶ ὁ γεγεννημένος, ἐκ τοῦ πνεύματος, πνευματικὸς ἐστὶ.* ‘He that is born of the flesh, is fleshly ; and he that is born of the Spirit, is spiritual.’ This interpretation is quite agreeable to the usage of the Scriptures, both of the Old and New Testament. Others, however, suppose that our Lord, in these words, has a reference to the opinion entertained by the Jews, that they, in consequence of their descent from Abraham, were the objects of God’s distinguished love and favour, and were the only heirs of the kingdom of heaven ; that by ‘flesh,’ therefore, we are to understand the nature of man simply, or natural nativity, and by ‘spirit,’ spiritual nativity ; and that, therefore, our Lord’s meaning is this : he who is born of men is a man, that is, by the mere privilege of birth a man has nothing peculiar, besides human nature and the external rights of kinsmanship ; but he who is born and changed by the Divine Spirit has a divine disposition of mind, which is necessary in order to entering into the divine kingdom. Our Lord added these words, to show that no one by birth has the right of citizenship in the Messiah’s kingdom, but that this is received only by those divine dispositions implanted by the Holy Spirit, and that, therefore, regeneration was necessary to the Jews. This interpretation is not inconsistent with Scripture usage, and it is by far the most agreeable to the context and the subject matter ; it is approved of by Semler, and greatly commended by J. F. Bahrdt, a Leipsic divine.¹ Once more, others suppose that by ‘Spirit’ we are to understand spirit in general, therefore, according to the law of disjunctives, by the word ‘flesh’ we are to understand body, and that in these words our Lord meant to give an example, to show what kind of generation he intended, namely, not natural, but spiritual generation, productive of spiritual effects, not the propagation of bodies, but the transformation of souls ; and that his meaning was this : Like is born of like, of flesh is born flesh, of body that which is corporeal, of spirit that which is spiritual ; that generation is not by body, therefore it is not corporeal, but

¹ Prol. Fest. Nat. Chr. a 1773, publice proposita.

by spirit, therefore it is spiritual. Erasmus interpreted the passage in this way, and the interpretation of Chrysostom is much the same.¹ But interpret it how you may, it stands true, that a transformation of the human spirit may be effected, and really is effected, by the divine Spirit.”—TITTMANN.

NOTE D, p. 10.

“ ‘Earthly things,’ τὰ ἐπίγεια, denote things that are well known, and more easy to be understood: ‘Heavenly things,’ τὰ ἐπουράνια, are things of a more abstruse nature, less known, and more difficult to be understood. The latter, indeed, are generally explained of things pertaining to the kingdom of grace and glory; the former, of worldly things; the connection, however, seems opposed to this interpretation. ‘Earthly things,’ *are things which occur on earth and before our eyes*; and again, things which may be easily known and understood by all; they are such things as those which our Lord had hitherto communicated to Nicodemus, such as, the necessity of a change of mind on the part of the Jews, and of their learning to see, and think, and act differently, if they would enter into the kingdom of the Messiah; these things every one could easily understand who was acquainted with the perverse opinions and manners of the Jews; and therefore they are called ‘earthly things.’ ‘Heavenly things,’ therefore, are properly things *which are done in heaven*, and again, *things which are secret, and, even if revealed, difficult to be understood*. Of this nature are the things which our Lord immediately proceeds to inculcate; such as: The Messiah is the Son of God; the Messiah shall die upon the cross; and by his death shall procure redemption, not for the Jewish nation only, but for the Gentiles likewise, and for the whole human race; these things were, ἐπουράνια, to the Jews of that period, that is, they were high and mysterious doctrines; Paul several times calls them ‘mysteries,’ μυστήρια, and Peter² calls them ‘things hard to be understood,’ δυσνόητα, things which they could not digest, and

¹ Hom. xxv. in Jo. Tom. viii. Opp. p. 144.² 2 Pet. iii. 16.

which were altogether contrary to their opinion and expectation ; since they seem at that time to have had little or no understanding of the divine nature of the Messiah, of his death, and of a salvation extending to the whole human race ; they supposed, rather, that he would be a most illustrious secular prince, that he would never die, but would reign for ever, conferring happiness on the Jewish nation only, but destroying the other nations.”—TITTMANN.

NOTE E, p. 10.

“Illa quidem Christi cum Deo Patre coniunctio omnino perpetua fuit, semperque continuata est, posteaquam is ex caelo descendit et versari in terra coepit ; ut, quamvis in terra habitaret, tamen etiamnunc in caelo *esse* iure diceretur, tamquam in domicilio proprio et suo. c. viii. 29 ; x. 38 ; xiv. 9—11 ; xvi. 15 ; xvii. Verumtamen hoc loco in verbis, ‘Ο ὁν ἐν τῇ οὐρανῷ, proprietatem participii *praesentis* temporis morosius urgere nolim. Qui enim cum CAMERARIO, ERASMO, RAPHELIO, BENGELIO, ERNESTIO, multisque aliis, ὁ ὁν pro ὅς ἦν positum putant, et sic interpretantur : ‘*Qui erat in caelo*, antequam ad terram descenderet,’ ii sane nihil faciunt, quod usui loquendi repugnet ; (Graeci enim hoc participio saepe sic utuntur, ut vim habeat *imperfecti* ; cf. etiam Io. ix. 25 ; xix. 38 ; Luc. xxiv. 44 ; 2 Cor. viii. 9.) nec leve huic sententiae praesidium parant e verbis ipsius Christi Io. VI. 62 ; *Si videritis hominem natum eo ascendentem, ubi ille ERAT antea* (ἄνω ἦν τὸ πρότερον). Ac de pondere, quod in Christi verbis inest, haec interpretatio nihil detrahit. Idem enim ille, qui iam ad terram descenderat, *erat* in principio, et *erat* apud Deum ; (Io. i. 1, 2.) *eratque* gloria praeditus apud Patrem ante mundum conditum, h. e. ab aeterno, c. xvii. 5.”—KNAPPIUS. Dr Pye Smith’s Dissertation on this verse, in his Scripture Testimony, book iv., chap. iii. sect. i., is deserving of careful perusal.

EXPOSITION II.

OUR LORD'S CONVERSATION WITH THE WOMAN OF SAMARIA.

JOHN iv. 4-42.

"I AM found of them who sought me not," is the language of the Messiah in the prophetic word, many ages before he made his appearance among mankind ; and the oracle has been frequently verified. His saving blessings are not only always unmerited by those on whom they are conferred, but they are often unsought ; and of all who form a part of his peculiar people, it may be as truly said as of his apostles, "It was not *they* who chose *him*, it was *he* who chose *them*."¹ When they were going on in their folly and sin—when they were alike ignorant of, and careless about, him and his salvation, HE, to use the apostle's peculiarly appropriate word, "apprehended"² them, aroused their attention, poured light into their darkened minds, opened their understandings to understand the truth, and their hearts to receive the love of that truth, so as to be saved by it. We have a beautiful illustration of these remarks in that part of our Lord's history, on the consideration of which we are about to enter.

¹ John xv. 16. Οὐχ ὑμεῖς με ἐξελίξασθε, ἀλλ' ἐγὼ ἐξελεξάμην ὑμᾶς.

² παρίλαβεν. Phil. iii. 12.

We were lately engaged in illustrating the remarkable conversation which took place between our Lord and Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The course of our expositions, calls us now to turn your attention to a not less interesting conversation between the same illustrious person, and a Samaritan woman. There is a striking contrast between the characters and the circumstances of the two individuals with whom our Lord conversed; the one a Jew—a man of rank, a senator, a man of learning, a doctor of the law, and apparently a man of unblemished reputation; the other a Samaritan—a woman of the lower ranks, for she came to draw water—a woman of very limited information, and apparently of loose habits, or, to say the least, of doubtful character. But the Samaritan woman does not seem to be farther from the kingdom of God, than the Jewish senator; and the Saviour's "meekness of wisdom," is equally displayed in his treatment of both.

The general interest which the preaching of Jesus had excited in Judea, and especially the circumstance of his baptising great multitudes, through the instrumentality of his disciples, attracted the notice of the Jewish rulers, who are called "the Pharisees" here and in some other places in the gospels, probably because the majority, and the most influential part, of the Sanhedrim, belonged to that sect; and seems to have suggested to them the necessity of taking some steps to prevent the progress of one whose views plainly were very different from theirs, and whose growing influence over the minds of the people might be dangerous to their authority.¹

Our Lord being aware of this, knowing that his hour was not yet come, and that much was yet to be done, before he closed his work on earth by his expiatory death, instead of waiting till he should be driven out of Judea, left that district of his own accord, and retired into Galilee,

¹ John iv. 1, 2.

which, being remote from Jerusalem, and under the government of Herod the Tetrarch, was less immediately under the eye, and less directly subject to the power, of the Sanhedrim. In going from Judea into Galilee, our Lord's most direct route lay through Samaria—not the city of that name, which was then known by another name, Sebaste, but the province of which that city was once the capital, and which still retained the name—a district of Palestine, bounded on the south by Judea, and on the north by Galilee, on the west by the Mediterranean Sea, and on the east by the river Jordan. It was possible to go from Judea into Galilee, by crossing the Jordan, and passing through Perea; but this was a very circuitous route, though some of the stricter Jews seem to have been in the habit of taking it, to avoid intercourse with the Samaritans. The direct road lay through Samaria.¹

This region, at the original settlement of the Jews in Canaan, had been allotted to Ephraim, and the half tribe of Manasseh.² From the time of the revolt of the ten tribes, its inhabitants had generally ceased to worship at the temple of Jerusalem, and followed first the corrupted form of religion established by Jeroboam, the son of Nebat;³ and then the Gentile idolatries introduced by his successors. After the great body of the ten tribes had been carried captive, and these regions left almost uninhabited, the king of Assyria planted in them a colony of various nations from the eastern part of his empire, who, mingling with the few original inhabitants, formed to themselves a strange medley of a religion, by mixing together the principles and rites of Judaism, and those of oriental idolatries—"fearing Jehovah," as the inspired historian remarks, "and serving their graven images."⁴ At the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity, the Samaritans, after having their alliance refused by the Jews, became their bitterest enemies, and the most active opposers of the re-building of their temple

¹ John iv. 3, 4.

² 1 Kings xii. 25-33.

³ Josh. xvi., xvii.

⁴ 2 Kings xvii. 24-41.

and capital.¹ At a subsequent period, Manasseh, the son of Jaddua, the high priest, contrary to the law, married the daughter of Sanballat, the chief of the Samaritans, and when the Jews insisted on his repudiating his wife, or renouncing the sacred office, he fled to his father-in-law, who gave him an honourable reception; and, by the permission of Alexander the Great, built a temple to Jehovah, in which Manasseh and his posterity officiated as high priests, in rivalry to the divinely instituted ritual at Jerusalem.²

The Samaritans received as divine, the five books of Moses, and probably, also, some at least of the prophetic oracles; but they did not acknowledge the authority of the historical books, as written by the Jews, whom they regarded as their worst enemies. The natural consequence of all these circumstances was, that the Jews and the Samaritans regarded each other with a much more rancorous dislike, than either of them did the idolatrous nations by which they were surrounded.³

In passing through this region, our Lord and his disciples arrived in the neighbourhood of one of its towns one day about noon, which in that country is intensely hot, and weary with his journey he sat down, "*thus*;"⁴ that is, like a fatigued person as he was, near a celebrated well, which took its name from the Patriarch Jacob—while his disciples went into the town to buy provisions. The proper name of the town seems to have been Shechem, or Sychem, but it was commonly called Sychar by the Jews—which appears to have been a species of reproachful nickname—the word signifying 'idolatrous,' or 'drunken.' The town is still in existence, and is now called Naplouse, a corruption of Neapolis.⁵

¹ Ezra iv. 2-11; iv. 4-24. Neh. vi. i. 14. ² 1 Mac. iii. 10. Jos. Antiq. xii. 5, 6.

³ Vide Relandi Dissert. Miscell. Diss. iii. and vii.

⁴ *Obsec.* Rev. iii. 16; orig. "Sic uti qualiscunque loci opportunitas ferebat, sine pompa, solus, ut qui non præ se ferret expectationem Samaritidis, sed meræ lassitudinis causa quietem vellet capere.—BENGEL.

⁵ Relandi Palestina, p. 1009.

This town was remarkable for being in the neighbourhood of that piece of ground which Jacob seems first to have purchased from the descendants of Hamor, and afterwards, when some Amorites had taken possession of it, to have recovered as his right by a successful appeal to arms—and which he left as a legacy to his favourite son Joseph.¹ We have no reason to doubt that the well which bore his name, was indeed dug by his orders, and that out of it he and his family drank while residing in this neighbourhood.

While our Lord was sitting alone, and worn out with fatigue, by Jacob's well, under the burning heat of an almost vertical sun, "a woman of Samaria,"—that is, not a native of the city of Samaria, but an inhabitant of the Samaritan region, and a professor of the Samaritan religion,—came out from the neighbouring town to draw water. Jacob's well, which still exists, is about a mile from Naplouse, but it is not unlikely that the ancient town extended further in the direction of the well than the modern one.

On this woman, bearing her pitcher, approaching the well, our Lord requested of her a draught of water:—He said to her, "Give me to drink."² The request, though it seems to us a very natural one, appears to have struck her with surprise. She knew the extreme dislike which Jews cherished towards Samaritans; she knew that, though they would buy and sell with Samaritans, it was accounted a sin by them to have any friendly intercourse with that people. "The Jews," says the evangelist,—for the words are plainly an explanatory note introduced by him,—"The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans."³

The general tone of feeling on this subject may be judged of by the following extracts from the Jewish Rabbins:—"It is prohibited to eat the bread, and to drink the wine, of a Samaritan. If any one receive a Samaritan into his house, and minister to him, he will cause his children to

¹ Gen. xxxiii. 19; xlviii. 22. Jos. xxiv. 32.

² John iv. 7.

³ John iv. 8.

be carried into captivity. He who eats the bread of a Samaritan, is as if he ate swine's flesh."¹

Aware of this extreme antipathy, the Samaritan woman expresses her amazement that a person whom, from his dress and dialect, she perceived to be a Jew, should deign to ask, or even receive, a favour from a Samaritan. "How is it, that thou being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?"² It is impossible for us to say precisely what was the temper in which these words were spoken. It depends very much on the tone and manner in which they were uttered, whether they were the expression of simple surprise, or malignant exultation.

Whatever were the woman's feelings towards the Saviour, his feelings towards her were those of compassion and kindness. His thoughts were "thoughts of good, and not of evil." "If thou knewest," said he meekly; "if thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water."³

By "*the gift of God*,"⁴ that which God gives freely, we apprehend we are to understand the blessings of the christian salvation—the knowledge of the true character of God—the pardon of sin—genuine holiness—conformity of mind and will to God—real happiness, suited to our various capacities of enjoyment, and enduring throughout the eternity of our being: in one word, that "eternal life," through Christ Jesus, which is "the gift of God."⁵ If, then, the Samaritan woman had known the nature and excellence of this gift of God, and if she had known that he who had requested her to give him a draught of water was indeed the Messiah—the promised Saviour—the author of this salvation—the person by whom God was to bestow this gift on mankind—instead of hesitating about complying with his request, she would immediately, in her turn, have become a petitioner; and,

¹ See Lightfoot, Schöttgen, and Lampé.

² John iv. 10.

³ Τὴν δωρεὰν τοῦ Θεοῦ.

⁴ John iv. 9.

⁵ Rom. vi. 23.

in answer to her petition, she would have found no hesitating delay, but would have received from him, what well deserves the name of "living water," as calculated to quench, and satisfy completely, the thirst for happiness.

This is plainly our Lord's meaning; but it was not apprehended by the Samaritan woman. "Little did she think"—to borrow the words of an old divine—"little did she think of the glories of him who stood right against her. He who sate on the well had a throne placed above the head of the cherubim; in his arms, who then rested himself, was the sanctuary of peace, where wearied souls were to lay their heads, and dispose their cares, and then turn them to joys, and to gild their thorns with glory; and that holy tongue, which was parched with heat, streamed forth rivulets of holy doctrine, which were to water all the world—to turn our deserts into paradise."¹

The woman replied, "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with,² and the well is deep; from whence, then, hast thou this living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle."³ The phrase "living water" literally signifies water issuing fresh from the fountain, as contrasted with water stagnant, and as it were dead, in a reservoir. Understanding the word in this sense, the woman's meaning may be thus brought out—"Spring water must be got either here, or somewhere else in the neighbourhood. You cannot get it here, for the well is deep,⁴ and you have no means of drawing water; and it is not probable that you are in this respect greater than Jacob, whom we, as well as you Jews, claim for our ancestor,—that you are better acquainted with the vicinity than he was, so as to know of a better fountain of spring water

¹ Jeremy Taylor.

² "Thou hast no bucket"—*ἔντελμα*.—CAMPBELL.

³ John iv. 11, 12. *Θερίσματα*. Hesychius explains it thus: *βοσκήματα, κρέματα, αἶμα*. Kypke renders it *domesticos*. It is one of the *ἀπαξ ληγόμενα*.

⁴ Travellers tell us the well is 105 feet deep, and now contains only five feet of water.

than that which he bequeathed to us, and out of which he and his family were accustomed to drink. Or, as the practice of figurative speech is common among the Orientals, perhaps the force of her reply may be—‘ You make great promises, but I see no evidence that you can perform them. If you can give me what will in any respect answer to your words, you must be a greater personage than Jacob—which I much doubt.’

Our Lord proceeds to make a statement, fitted and intended to render it still more plain that he was speaking figuratively. “ Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: but whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”¹ The “ water” spoken of by our Lord has been explained by some of his doctrine; and by others of the influences of the Holy Spirit. We think it far more natural to understand it as coincident in meaning with “ the gift of God,” as equally with that phrase referring to the christian salvation in all its extent. This salvation is of such a nature, as not only to give immediate relief to him who receives it, but to satisfy him permanently. Howsoever his capacities of enjoyment may be enlarged, there is in this salvation what will fill these capacities to an overflow for ever. This is the idea so beautifully expressed by this living water being, in the person who had drunk it, “ a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

It may be said figuratively of all earthly sources of enjoyment, as well as literally of Jacob’s well, “ He that drinketh of this water shall thirst again.” It is the living waters of “ the salvation that is in Christ with eternal glory,” which alone can quench for ever the thirst for happiness. To borrow again the language of the eloquent theologian formerly quoted—“ Here we labour, but receive no benefit;

¹ John iv. 13, 14.

we sow many times, and reap not ; or reap, and do not gather in ; or gather in, and do not possess ; or possess, and do not enjoy ; or if we enjoy, we are still unsatisfied : it is with anguish of spirit, and circumstances of vexation. A great heap of riches makes neither our clothes more warm, our meat more nutritive, nor our beverage more pleasant. It feeds the eye, but never fills it. Like drink to a hydropick person, it increases the thirst and promotes the torment. But the grace of God fills the furrows of the heart ; and, as the capacity increases, it grows itself in equal degrees, and never suffers any emptiness or dissatisfaction, but carries content and fulness all the way ; and the degrees of augmentation are not steps and near approaches to satisfaction, but increasings of the capacity. The soul is satisfied all the way, and receives more, not because it wanted any, but that it can now hold more, being become more receptive of felicity ; and in every minute of sanctification, there is so excellent a condition of joy, that the very calamities, afflictions, and persecutions of the world, are turned into felicities, by the activity of the prevailing ingredient : like a drop of water falling into a tun of wine, it is ascribed into a new family, losing its own nature by a conversion into the more noble. For, now that all passionate desires are dead, and there is nothing remanent that is vexatious, the peace, the serenity, the quiet sleeps, the evenness of spirit, and contempt of things below, remove the soul from all neighbourhood of displeasure, and place it at the foot of the throne, whither, when it is ascended, it is possessed of felicities eternal. These were the waters which were given us to drink, when, with the rod of God, the rock, Christ Jesus, was smitten. The Spirit of God moves for ever upon these waters ; and, when the angel of the covenant had stirred the pool, whosoever descends hither shall find health and peace, joys spiritual, and the satisfaction of eternity.”¹

¹ Jeremy Taylor.

We can scarcely believe that the woman still thought our Lord was speaking literally. She must have seen that he was using figurative language, and that the living water he spoke of, was something else than water fresh from the spring. But she seems to have considered him as a person who was amusing himself, by attempting to awaken in her expectations he could not gratify, and therefore she replies to him in a sarcastic jest:—"Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw."¹

It was the purpose of our Lord "to manifest himself to this woman in another way than he does to the world." It was his determination to make her acquainted with his true character, and to put her in possession of the blessings of his salvation. Instead of replying to her jesting request, he bids her "go and call her husband."² This led her to state that she 'had no husband;'³ and this statement drew from our Lord a declaration, which must have overwhelmed the woman with astonishment and shame, as it showed that this mysterious stranger was intimately acquainted with all the circumstances of her history, which had not been a very honourable one. "Thou hast well said, I have no husband: for thou hast had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband: in that saidst thou truly."⁴ Whether these five husbands, whom this woman had had in succession, had all died, or whether one or more of these marriages had been dissolved by divorce, it is needless to inquire, for it is impossible to know. It seems plain, from the circumstance of her living in concubinage with a man to whom she was not married, which is the most obvious meaning of the words, "He whom thou now hast is not thy husband," that she was a person of loose morals, and disreputable character.

Self-knowledge is necessary to prepare for the right apprehension of divine things. The knowledge which our

¹ John iv. 16.² John iv. 16.³ John iv. 17.⁴ John iv. 18.

Lord discovered of this woman's character and history, persuaded her that he must have supernatural means of information, and accordingly she said to him :—" Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet ;" ¹ and not improbably glad of an opportunity of shifting the discourse from a subject so painful and discreditable to her, she introduces the great point of controversy between the Jews and the Samaritans, that she might hear his opinion respecting it. It is no uncommon thing for persons living in sin, not merely to pretend, but really to have, an interest in, and a zeal for, what they call their religion. Speculation about theological doctrine is often found in unnatural union with habitual neglect of moral duty ; and among the endless tortuosities of the depraved human heart, this is one, to seek in polemical discussions respecting orthodoxy and heterodoxy, protection from the shafts of conviction, for plain violations of the law of God. " Who can understand the errors" of that " deceitful and desperately wicked" thing, the human heart ?

Anxious as it were to get rid of so uncomfortable a theme, she proposes to Jesus, as a prophet, the great question between the Jews and the Samaritans, respecting the proper place of performing public worship to Jehovah. We have no reason to think that this woman had any conscientious anxiety as to the resolution of this question. The subject seems introduced by her merely for the purpose of turning aside a conversation which was likely to lead into details in no way agreeable or creditable to her :—" Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." ²

To " worship" plainly means here ' to perform the solemn rites of public worship.' In the laws of Moses, which the Jews and Samaritans equally acknowledged as divine, it was distinctly stated that after Israel had entered into

¹ John iv. 19.

² John iv. 20.

Canaan, there should be a particular place appropriated for this purpose, where alone public worship could be lawfully celebrated.¹ So far both parties were agreed; but the Jews insisted that Jerusalem was the proper place for this purpose, while the Samaritans obstinately stood up for Gerizim.

“Our fathers,” says the Samaritan woman, “worshipped in this mountain.” It is not easy to say exactly who those fathers are, to whom she refers. It is possible she refers to those remote ancestors, Abraham and Jacob, who erected altars at Shechem, on or near Mount Gerizim; or to the Israelites, who, immediately after their coming into Canaan, had the Divine blessing pronounced on them from that mountain, and for 300 years were accustomed to worship in that neighbourhood, at Shiloh; or to their more immediate ancestors, who had built a temple on Mount Gerizim, where services, similar to those of the Jewish temple at Jerusalem, were performed. That temple had indeed been destroyed by John Hyrcanus, about 160 years before this, but it is not improbable that it had been rebuilt, though with less magnificence; at any rate, public divine worship appears to have been still performed there.

The Jews, on the other hand, held that “Jerusalem was the place where men ought to worship,” and they had good ground for so holding. David, by whose direction the ark of the covenant, the symbol of the Divine presence, was brought to Jerusalem, was a prophet, and acted under Divine direction. The particular site of the temple was fixed by a miraculous sign.² The temple was, thus, built in strict accordance with Divine revelation. Jehovah solemnly declared to Solomon:—“I have hallowed this house which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever;” “I have chosen Jerusalem, that my name may be there.”³

“He chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. And he built his sanctuary like high palaces, like the

¹ Deut. xii. 5-14.

² 1 Chron. xxi. 26, &c.

³ 1 Kings ix. 3. 2 Chron. vi. 6.

earth which he hath established for ever.”¹ “The Lord hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.”² Such were the opinions of the Samaritans and Jews, respecting the proper place of worship, and such were the grounds on which their respective opinions were founded.

It was obviously the design of the Samaritan woman to engage our Lord in the discussion of this controversy; but he in a good degree waived it, turning her attention to a subject of infinitely greater importance than the place of worship, even the nature of acceptable worship; and assuring her that the time was at hand, when all controversies in reference to the place of public worship would become obsolete, and would lose their interest:—“Woman,” said he, “believe me, the hour cometh when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father.”³ The meaning of these words plainly is, ‘the time is just at hand when the solemn public worship of God “the Father,” the common Father of his human family, shall not be confined to any one place, and when of course the controversy whether Gerizim or Jerusalem has the better claim to that honour, shall be superseded.’ Some have supposed that a particular period is referred to as the ultimate limit of that order of things, in which the solemn public worship of Jehovah was restricted to a particular place. In this case the reference is probably to the fall of Jerusalem; but I do not know that more is meant than merely, ‘Yet a very little while and this state of things shall be no more.’

“Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews.”⁴ In saying that the Samaritans worshipped they knew not what, we apprehend our Lord refers not so much to the object of worship, as to the manner of worship:—‘In worshipping God, ye are not guided by his will as to the place of his worship; you have no

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 68, 69.

² John iv. 21.

³ Psalm cxxxii. 13, 14.

⁴ John iv. 22.

Divine authority for worshipping at Gerizim. On the other hand, we Jews know, on good grounds, that in worshipping at Jerusalem, we are acting in compliance with the Divine will.' These words are just equivalent to, 'In the question between you and the Jews, you are wrong, and they are right; you are ignorant, and they are well-informed.'

He adds as a reason, "for salvation is of the Jews." "Salvation" here seems equivalent to 'the Saviour'—that is, the Messiah. In this way the word is used in Luke :—"Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: for mine eyes have seen thy salvation." "And all flesh shall see the salvation of God;"¹ and in the Acts of the Apostles—"So hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth."² 'The Messiah is to arise from among the Jews, and therefore the true mode of worshipping Jehovah is to be found among them.'

But that question, as to the proper place of worshipping Jehovah—though, without doubt, the Jews were right, and the Samaritans wrong—was, as a practical question, very soon to cease to be of much interest. For, continues our Lord, "The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him."³ 'Under that order of things which is just about to be established, and in which the Divine Being is to be remarkably manifested as the "Father" of men, the great question will not be, *where* he is to be worshipped, but *how*. The worshipper at Jerusalem will not be accounted a true worshipper because he worships there, nor the worshipper at Gerizim a false worshipper because he worships there; the worshipper in spirit and in truth, wherever he worships, whether in Jerusalem or Gerizim, or anywhere else—whether

¹ Luke ii. 29, 30; lili. 6.² Acts xiii. 47.³ John iv. 23.

in Canaan, or in any other country—he, he alone, is the genuine worshipper.’

To “worship *in spirit*,” is to worship spiritually; to “worship *in truth*,” is to worship truly. They are not two different kinds of worship; they are two different aspects of the same worship: to worship spiritually, is in opposition to the performance of mere external rites, to give to God the homage of an enlightened mind, and an affectionate heart; to know, admire, esteem, love, trust, and submit to him; and to worship him truly, is either to worship him according to the truth—that is, in a manner suited to the revelation he has made of his character; or really, not merely in appearance, but in substance—not in pretension only, but in sincerity. Such—such alone—are the acceptable worshippers. The Father seeketh these for his worshippers.¹ These are the worshippers whom he acknowledges. The worshipper at Jerusalem, without this, will not be accepted. The worshipper at Gerizim, with this, will not be rejected. The economy, whose great characters were externality and typism, is about to close; the economy, whose great characters are spirituality and reality, is about to take place.

“God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.”² The Father seeketh those who worship in spirit and truth as his worshippers. They are the objects of his choice and preference; and the reason is plain—he himself is spiritual—“God is a Spirit.” These words are equivalent to—‘God is a living, intelligent, active being.’ And, from his nature as God, he must possess all those attributes in the greatest possible, or rather in an infinite, measure. He is the author and fountain of life; he knows everything, and is infinitely wise; he

¹ Even under the former economy, such were alone acceptable worshippers, in the true sense of the word. Psal. i. 7-23. Isa. i. 11-20. Micah vi. 6-8. Amos v. 21-24.

² John iv. 24.

is the great original power in the universe, "who worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will;" "who doth according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth;" whose arm none can stay, and to whom none dares say, "what doest thou?"¹ Worship, to be acceptable to him, must be suited to his nature. It must be spiritual; it must be the worship of man as an intelligent being—the worship of the mind and of the heart; it must be true worship, not false, like that of the idolater; not merely external and apparent, like that of the formal ceremonialist; not insincere, like that of the hypocrite. "How has the lofty truth, the world-historical import of the saying of Christ, been lost sight of by those who have taken it as an isolated expression, apart from its connection with christian theism, and with the whole divine process for the development of christian life, by those abstract, naked, one-sidedly-intellectual deists and pantheists, who have dreamed that they could incorporate it into their discordant system by their spiritual fetishism, which substitutes the deification of an idea for the spiritual, truthful, adoration of God as a Spirit. The aristocracy of education, the one-sided intellectualism of the ancient world, was uprooted by Christ when he uttered this great truth to an uneducated woman, who belonged to an ignorant and uncultivated people."²

These sublime truths, to which nothing comparable is to be found in the writings of the most accomplished of the heathen sages, were, no doubt, but imperfectly understood by the Samaritan woman. She was probably mortified at his determining the question so decidedly against her country; and, though she does not contradict him, she refers the settlement of the controversy to the Messiah, who, on his coming, would restore all things—set all things to rights. "I

¹ Morus' Dissertation "De Deo, spiritu ad popularem intelligentiam accommodare describendo" may be consulted with advantage.—*Disserti. Theolog. et Philolog.*, Vol. i., Diss. x., p. 328.

² Neander.

know," said she, "that the Messiah cometh," or is coming; (the words, "who is called Christ," form an explanatory note of the evangelist, showing that the Gospel was originally published among those who did not understand Hebrew); "when he is come, he will tell us all things."¹

It seems probable that the expectation of the speedy appearance of the Messiah was general at this period among the Samaritans, as well as the Jews. The former do not seem to have mingled the political element with their expectations; and anticipated in him a teacher as well as a deliverer. That expectation, probably, was founded on the oracle:—"The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."²

Our Lord, with infinite condescension and kindness, revealed his true character to this poor woman, and assured her that He was the Messiah, whose coming she was expecting, and that this was the instruction which was to be expected from him:—"I that speak unto thee am he."³ Our Lord was very cautious of owning, in so many words, his Messiahship among the Jews, for two reasons—they were ready, either to stir up insurrection, and take him by force, and make him their leader, or to accuse him to the Roman government as a seditious person. There was no such hazard here. The Samaritan woman believed our Lord's declaration, and, we can have no doubt, asked and obtained the living water; but, impatient to impart intelligence so important and so delightful to her fellow-citizens, "she left her pitcher, and ran back into the city."

Just about this time his disciples returned with the provisions they had obtained; and, though they were amazed that their Master should have entered into familiar conversation with a Samaritan woman, being under the influence of their national prejudice, which held it unworthy of a wise

¹ John iv. 25.² Deut. xviii. 15.³ John iv. 26.

man to talk with a woman,¹ and unfit for a Jew to be familiar with a Samaritan, yet such was their reverence for him, that they did not presume to make any remark on his conduct.²

On arriving at the city, the woman invited her fellow-citizens to come along with her, and see a person who had discovered a perfect acquaintance with her history, and whom she had reason to think was really the long-promised Messiah :—"Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did; is not this the Christ?"³ Struck with her statements, many of them accompanied her in her return to the well.⁴

Meanwhile our Lord's disciples, seeing their Master apparently absorbed in thought, urged him to partake of the provision they had brought.⁵ He replied to their friendly requests :—"I have meat to eat that ye know not of."⁶ Our Lord's meaning plainly is, 'Something of which you are ignorant has occurred, which has delighted and invigorated me, so as that I have no appetite for natural food.'

His disciples, though even already they must have been in some measure accustomed to his enigmatical form of speech, understood him literally, and supposed, that in their absence some person might have furnished him with food.⁷ To remove their misapprehension, our Lord subjoins :—"My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish *his* work;" that is, the work he has entrusted me with. 'In performing the great work committed to me, I find more pleasure than even in my necessary food; success in that, is, in my apprehension, the richest feast.'

At this moment, the multitude of Samaritans appear to have been seen leaving the city, and coming towards them. On perceiving them, our Lord thus addressed the disciples :

¹ He who instructs his daughter in the law is like one that plays the fool.—Talmud, Tr. Sota, f. 20.

² John iv. 27.

⁴ John iv. 31.

³ John iv. 28, 29.

⁵ John iv. 32.

⁶ John iv. 30.

⁷ John iv. 33.

“ Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? Behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One soweth, and another reapeth. I sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour: other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.”¹

‘It is a common saying among you, When the seed is cast into the ground, in four months we shall have harvest; but lift up your eyes, and say, if, though we have but commenced sowing, it be not harvest already; are not this people really a people prepared for the Lord?’² It is likely our Lord refers here not only to what has just occurred, but also to the great success which had attended his labours, and those of his disciples, in Judea.

“And he that reapeth receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal: that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together,”³ *q. d.*, ‘This is a work in which it is indeed a privilege to be engaged.’ “The reaper,” that is, the person who succeeds in converting men to the faith of Christ, “he receiveth wages,” he shall obtain a glorious reward; and “the fruit he gathers shall be to life eternal.” This either refers to his reward being an eternal one, or rather, denotes that those who are converted by his means, the fruits of his ministry, shall be saved everlastingly; so that the sower, he who used means for their salvation, and did not see their complete success; and he that reapeth—that is, who has been the means of their conversion—may, in their everlasting salvation, find a common enjoyment.’

The proverb, “one soweth, and another reapeth,” was fulfilled in the case of our Lord’s disciples: “Other men had laboured, and they had entered into their labours:” “I

¹ John iv. 35-38.² John iv. 35.³ John iv. 36.

sent you to reap that whereon ye bestowed no labour : other men laboured, and ye are entered into their labours.”¹ It was owing to John’s preliminary labours, that their preaching had been so successful. This was, very likely, said by our Lord, to repress the vanity of his disciples, who might be flattered by the great multitudes that in Judea had been induced to submit to baptism. Some interpreters have supposed that these words are prophetic, and refer to what took place when his disciples entered into his labours, as well as those of John the Baptist, and the ancient prophets, thus including the abundant harvest of vast multitudes, both of Jews and Samaritans.

Many of the Samaritans were induced, by the report of their townswoman, to believe in Christ Jesus as the Messiah ; which almost necessarily leads us to the conclusion, that, in so short a narrative, many circumstances which took place must have been omitted. These converts, on coming to our Lord, earnestly requested him to remain with them some time.² With this request our Lord graciously complied, and continued with them two days. These two days were no doubt busily employed by him, in instructing them in the word of the kingdom. Whether he performed any miracles here, we cannot certainly say ; there being no mention of them, is not certain evidence that they were not wrought. At any rate, by means of his discourses, a great number of additional disciples were gained to his cause.

The “creed,” or profession of faith of the Samaritans, deserves notice :—“We know, that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the *world*.”³ They seem to have been freer from prejudice, as to the design of the Messiah’s mission, than the Jews. This may have arisen from the principal prediction of the Messiah, recognised by them, distinctly stating, “That to him should the gathering of the *peoples* be.”⁴

¹ John iv. 37, 38.² John iv. 39, 40, 41.³ John iv. 42.⁴ Gen. xlix. 10.

The passage we have been considering, is replete with practical instruction.

Let us be grateful, that we live under the spiritual dispensation ; let us improve our privileges ; let us recollect that they bring with them a heavy responsibility, and that a carnal, nominal, hypocritical professor of Christianity, will be punished much more severely than a carnal, nominal, hypocritical Jew or Samaritan.

Let ministers and others engaged in cultivating the spiritual harvest, beware of becoming “weary in well-doing ;” “in due season they shall reap if they faint not.” Let them imbibe the spirit, and imitate the conduct, of their Lord and Master.

And let all seek to know, not only from the testimony of others, but from their own experience, that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the divinely commissioned and qualified Saviour of the world. It is only as the Saviour of the world, that any of us can ever have access to him as our own Saviour. But if we do not through faith receive him as our own Saviour, it will avail only to our deeper condemnation that he was made known to us—it may be acknowledged by us, as the Saviour of the world.

EXPOSITION III.

OUR LORD'S DEFENCE OF HIS WORKING MIRACLES ON THE SABBATH-DAY.

JOHN v. 17-47.

To understand aright the very interesting passage which has now been read, it is of importance that we keep steadily in view who it is that makes these statements, and what were the circumstances in which he was placed when he made them. The speaker is Jesus Christ, the incarnate Only Begotten of God; the divine, and the divinely appointed and qualified, Saviour of men; "the Word, who was in the beginning, who was with God, who was God;" who had become "flesh, and dwelt among men, full of grace and truth," possessing and displaying, amid all the weakness of the nature he assumed, and the debasement and suffering of the state to which he submitted, a glory peculiar to himself—"the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father."¹ If this be not steadily kept in view, many of the statements contained in this discourse will be unintelligible, and apparently inconsistent.

The circumstances in which this illustrious speaker was placed when he uttered this discourse, must also be attended to, if we would rightly understand it. On the sabbath-

¹ John i. 1, 14, 16, 18.

day, the day appropriated by Divine command to cessation from labour, Jesus Christ had miraculously cured a man who had laboured for thirty-eight years under a paralytic affection ; and had commanded him, as an evidence of the completeness of his cure, to take up the bed on which he lay, and carry it. On this account, he was charged by the Jewish rulers with the violation of the rest of the sabbath, which, under that economy, was not only, in a religious point of view, a sin, but, in a civil point of view, a crime, exposing him who was guilty of it to the punishment of death.

This was a charge repeatedly brought against our Lord by his enemies ; and his ordinary mode of meeting it was by pleading the character of the works which he performed. They were acts of mercy ; and it was admitted, even by themselves, that the law of the sabbath was not violated by such acts, however laborious and troublesome. Of this mode of vindication we have various examples :—
 “ And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath-day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out ? How much then is a man better than a sheep ? Wherefore, it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.”¹ “ And behold, there was a woman which had a spirit of infirmity eighteen years, and was bowed together, and could in no wise lift up herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her to him, and said unto her, Woman, thou art loosed from thine infirmity. And he laid his hands on her : and immediately she was made straight, and glorified God. And the ruler of the synagogue answered with indignation, because that Jesus had healed on the sabbath-day, and said unto the people, There are six days in which men ought to work : in them therefore come and be healed, and not on the sabbath-day. The Lord then answered him, and said, Thou hypocrite, doth not each one of you on the sabbath loose

¹ Matth. xii. 11, 12.

his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead him away to watering? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo, these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the sabbath-day? And when he had said these things, all his adversaries were ashamed: and all the people rejoiced for all the glorious things that were done by him.”¹

In the case before us, however, for the purpose of unfolding the truth with regard to his own personal dignity and official character, he chose to follow a different course. He takes at once far higher ground, and distinctly intimates that he, as well as his Father, is the Lord of the Sabbath.

“My Father,” said he, “worketh hitherto, and I work.”² The meaning of these words, and their force as a defence of our Lord’s conduct in healing the impotent man on the sabbath-day, have been variously understood. Some consider them as equivalent to—‘The works which I perform are not only my works, but my Father’s; my Father works while I work; the healing of this impotent man is not so much my work, as the work of my Father:’ as he says elsewhere:—“The Father, that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works.” ‘In blaming me, then, you blame God. The work which I have done is one which nothing short of divine power could accomplish; and to represent it as an unlawful deed is the height of impiety.’

This is quite an appropriate and an unanswerable defence; but we doubt if the words, fairly interpreted, express this meaning. The idea they naturally suggest, and which, from the impression made on the minds of the Jews, the idea they seem to have suggested, is:—‘My Father hitherto, from the creation of the world, has continued to work on the sabbath-day; and I also work on the sabbath-day.’ Though God on the seventh day rested from the work of creation, the giving being to new orders of creatures, he is

¹ Luke xiii. 11-17.

² John v. 17.

continually employed in the preservation and government of the world. The great machine of the universe does not stand still on the sabbath-day: the mighty and the minute processes of nature experience no interruption: the sun rises and sets, the grass grows, the river rolls on, the blood circulates, on the sabbath, as well as on the other days of the week. 'What my Father does,' says our Lord, 'I do: He works on the sabbath-day, and I work on the sabbath-day; and who dare call in question either his right or mine to do so?'

Our Lord here obviously claims a twofold equality with the Father. He does the same works with him; and, like him, he works perpetually.

Instead of being overawed by this statement, made by one who, by his miracles, had clearly proved that he was a divine messenger, the Jewish rulers were exasperated by it, and thought that they had now found an additional and a stronger reason for seeking to bring him to capital punishment. He, in their estimation, had not only violated the law of the sabbath, but been guilty of the crime of blasphemy, in saying "that God was his proper¹ Father, thus making himself equal with God."²

It is quite plain that our Lord's argument has no force, if his claim of sonship is not thus to be understood. It were at once impious and absurd for those who are termed "sons of God," in the sense in which the Jewish magistrates received this appellation, or in the sense in which the term is applied to all good men, to argue in this way, 'I have a right to do whatever God does.' It is obvious that our Lord did claim sonship, in a sense peculiar to himself—sonship, in a sense which implied identity of nature, and equality of authority. 'My Father works on the sabbath-day, and who dare find fault with him? I work on the sabbath-day, and who dare find fault with me?'

¹ *idem*.

² John v. 19.

The Jewish rulers, not believing Him to be what he was, an incarnation of God, and the divine, and the divinely-appointed, Saviour of the world, considered this assertion as, in itself, a greater crime than that for which it had been brought forward as a defence. To the crime of sabbath-violation he had, in their estimation, added that of blasphemy; for, in calling God "his Father," he had claimed identity of nature with him, thus "making himself equal with God."

Such was the inference they drew from his words, and it appears that it was a fair inference. He does not accuse them of misrepresenting his meaning; he does not protest against their construction of his words. He goes on to state the truth with regard to his person and office, and the evidence on which it rested, and thus to vindicate himself equally from the charge of sabbath-violation in having healed, by his divine power, an impotent man on that day, and of blasphemy, in making an assertion which, by necessary implication, was a claim of equality with God.

I.—THE DOCTRINE.

The general idea pervading the whole discourse is this:—
 'There exists a perfect unity of mind and will, and operation, between the Father and the Son.' The works of the Son are really divine works; so that, neither can he be justly accused of sabbath-violation for working on the sabbath-day, nor of blasphemy, in making himself equal with God.

"The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do."¹ These words have sometimes been explained, as if they meant, The Son, as the mediatorial servant of the Father, does nothing but according to the will of the Father. This is true; but it does not seem to be the

¹ John v. 19.

truth here stated. Our Lord's defence is not, that his works were divinely appointed works, but that they were divine works. The meaning seems to be, 'The Son can do nothing separately from the Father.'¹

The word "can"² is, I apprehend, to be understood in its strict meaning of physical impossibility. It is true, from the moral perfection of the God-man, Christ Jesus, he was morally incapable of doing anything inconsistent with the will of his Father. But here, the question is about an act of physical power—the miraculous cure of the impotent man—and the meaning seems to be, 'It is impossible for the Son to exercise divine power separate from the Father; when the Son works, the Father works also.'

To "see," here, is just equivalent to 'to know'—to know intuitively. When the Son exerts his divine power, it is always in the conscious knowledge, arising from the possession of the same divine nature, that it is the will of the Father that it should be so exerted; and as in this way the Son can do nothing but what the Father does, so, on the other hand, "what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise."³ He does only what he, by the possession of the same divine nature, is conscious that the Father is doing; and he does all that the Father does "likewise,"⁴ in the like manner, doing not only what He does, but doing it as He does it; that is, in a way comporting with the absolute perfection of their common divine nature.

All is of the Father—all is by the Son. Did the Father create the universe? So did the Son. Does the Father uphold the universe? So does the Son. Does the Father govern the universe? So does the Son. Is the Father the Saviour of the world? So is the Son. Surely the Jews did not err when they concluded that our Lord made himself

¹ "Candor est lucis æternæ. Attende candorem solis. In cælo est et expandit candorem per terras omnes: Si separas candorem solis a sole, separa Verbum a Patre."—AUGUSTIN.

² δύναται.

³ John v. 19.

⁴ ὁμοίως.

equal with God. Surely he who is so intimately connected with God, that he does what God does, does all that God does, does all in the same manner in which God does it; surely such a person cannot but be equal with God.

Our Lord adds, "For the Father loveth the Son."¹ There is an ineffable, infinite affection of the Father to the Son, necessarily springing out of their common possession of infinite excellence; and this love is manifested in the Father's "showing the Son all that he doeth"² in—if I may venture on the expression—in his having no secrets with him.

The idea seems to be this, that the love of the Father and of the Son, their perfect complacency in each other, is manifest in that perfect knowledge which the Son has of the period at which, the purpose for which, and the manner in which, the divine power equally possessed by them is to be put forth. 'It is in consequence of this perfect knowledge,' as if our Lord had said—'that in this case I have exerted divine power while my Father was exerting it.'

And he adds, 'still further, still more extraordinary manifestations of this community of knowledge, will, and operation of the Father and of the Son, will be made.' "He will show you greater works than these, that ye may all marvel,"³ or, "so that ye shall all marvel;" that is, we apprehend, 'The Son in consequence of his perfect knowledge of the mind, and will, and operations of his divine Father, will yet make still more remarkable displays of that divine power which is equally his Father's and his *own*, such displays, as will fill with amazement all who witness them.'⁴

What these displays were to be, appears from what follows.—He had healed an impotent man, but he was soon to raise to life some who had been dead; nay, at a future period he was to raise to life all the dead, and act as the Governor and Judge of all mankind.

¹ John v. 20.

² John v. 20.

³ John v. 20.

⁴ "Hæc ostensio est intimæ unitatis. Conferunt huc, Psal. xlv. 5. 'DOCEBIT te res stupendas dextera tua.'—BENGEL.

Such intimate knowledge of all the designs and operations of the Almighty and Eternal God ; such a knowledge as may be compared to acute vision ; such intuition of the Divine plan of operation, together with the putting forth the Divine energies necessary to carry this plan into execution,—surely this, if anything can, proves the proper divinity of our Lord and Saviour.

“ For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them ; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.”¹ These words seem an illustration of the statement made in the close of the 19th verse,—“ whatsoever things the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise ;” as well as a specimen of “ the greater things ” than the healing of the impotent man.

“ For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them ; even so the Son quickeneth whom he will.” The Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them,—That is, ‘ God possesses the power, and that power is peculiar to Divinity, of raising up and giving life to the dead.’ It is one of the peculiar characteristics of the living and true God, that he is “ the God that quickeneth the dead.” “ Unto God the Lord belong the issues from death.”² “ Why should it be counted an incredible thing, that *God* should raise the dead,”³ says the apostle, obviously intimating that it might well be accounted an impossible thing for any one else to raise them. Now, this power is claimed by our Lord in the most absolute manner,—the power not only of raising up, but of quickening, and of raising up and quickening whom he will.

He “ has life in himself, as the Father has life in himself,” so that he can, not merely, like the apostles, acting as the instruments of divine power, or rather as its heralds, declare that power shall be manifested in raising this or that person from the dead, but he can resuscitate and reanimate whomsoever he will. It is a power inherent in him, which he can

¹ John v. 21.

² Rom. iv. 14. Psal. lxviii. 20.

³ Acts xxvi. 8.

exert whenever he chooses. With regard to all the dead, he has but to speak the word, and they live.

But not only is the Son thus possessed, as a divine person, of the same power as the Father, but in the economy of salvation, the Father has appointed him to fill such offices, and to perform such works, as are competent only to one who is possessed of divine perfections, and he has done this for the express purpose that men should yield to his Son the same religious homage as they do to himself. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son: That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him."¹

The sum of our Lord's statements, in what goes before, seems to be this—'The Son is, equally with the Father, possessed of divine perfections.—His works are, equally with the Father's, divine works.' The sum of the statement that follows, seems to be—'In the economy of man's salvation the Father has appointed him to manifest his own divine perfections, so that men may be led to honour him, even as they honour the Father.'

The word "judge,"² may be understood either in a more confined, or in a more extended sense. In the first case, it is equivalent to 'finally to determine,' and refers to what we ordinarily term "the last judgment," which is to follow the general resurrection, and in which all men are to "receive according to the deeds which they have done, whether they be good or evil."³ In the second case, it is equivalent to 'to govern—to rule.'⁴ The first sense is included in the last; and therefore we are inclined to prefer it, being disposed to take the words in the most extended sense they will bear.

Under the economy of grace, the whole administration of the Divine moral government is put into the hands of the

¹ John v. 22, 23.

² *αἰτέω*.

³ 2 Cor. v. 10.

⁴ Psal. xcvi. 13; xcviii. 9; cx. 6. Isa. ii. 4; xi. 3. Mic. iv. 3. Rev. xix. 11.

incarnate Son—the glorified God-man, Christ Jesus. “Jehovah has said to our Lord, Sit thou at my right hand;”¹ and there he sits and reigns, and must continue to reign, till all his enemies are made his footstool. He has obtained “a name above every name.” “Angels, principalities, and powers being made subject to him.”² The Father does not directly, but by the Son, administer government under the new economy; he hath committed all government to the Son. Everything connected with the government of the church and of the world, inclusive of the final distribution of rewards and punishments, has been entrusted to him.

It has sometimes been said, with something like a sneer, by the Unitarian enemies of the doctrine of our Lord’s proper divinity, —‘It would seem, according to your views, that this appointment was a very unnecessary thing; nothing being given to the Son except what, according to you, he always possessed.’ But surely it does not require much acuteness, to see the distinction between the possession, and the exercise, of a power, “to observe the distinction between an original ground of suitability in the capacity and qualifications of an agent for a given purpose, and a consequent investment of that agent with a particular function appropriated to that purpose.”³ The design of the Father in appointing the Son to be in reference to all creatures the Supreme Ruler, is “that all may honour the Son as they honour the Father.” He has appointed him to an office, the discharge of the functions of which, absolutely requires divine perfections, that in the display of these he may appear entitled to, and may receive, divine homage.

“That,” may either be considered as equivalent to, ‘in order that,’ or ‘so that,’ as indicating the design of God, or as indicating the conclusion which ought to be drawn from the fact. Surely our Lord has here very distinctly told us who and what he is. For, after having attributed to himself

¹ Psal. cx. 1.

² Phil. ii. 9. Eph. i. 21. 1 Pet. iii. 22.

³ Pye Smith.

⁴ *ibid.*

works obviously divine, he here in express words, claims for himself divine worship—worship equal to that rendered to the Father.

The word rendered “to honour,”¹ does not of itself convey the idea of worship. But to honour God, is to worship him. Every mark of respect, inferior to worship, would be not honour, but insult to HIM. To honour God, is to worship him; and to worship God, is just to think, and feel, and act, towards him, in conformity to the revelation he has made of himself. He has revealed himself as infinitely great, excellent, and good—the creator, preserver, proprietor, governor, of all things. To think, feel, and act in conformity to this revelation; in other words, supremely to esteem, reverence, love, and trust in God, and to express these sentiments in obedience and submission, this is to worship God.

To “honour the Father,” expresses that modification of religious worship which rises out of the revelation which God has made of himself in the paternal character. God has made himself known as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and as our God and Father in him, as God; loving the world, God reconciling the world to himself. Now he is not honoured in this character, unless we look to him with unsuspecting confidence for every blessing we need for time and eternity, through the mediation of his Son.

To “honour the Son,” is just to regard the Son with those sentiments and feelings which correspond with the revelation made of Him, as “the” eternal “Word,” “the brightness of his Father’s glory,” “God manifest in the flesh,” the divinely appointed and the divinely qualified, Redeemer of men.

The honour which it is the will of the Father should be given to the Son, is the same honour that is due to himself,

¹ *τιμᾶν*.

“that all should honour the Son as they honour the Father.” It is not an honour resembling that due to himself, but it is honour equal to that due to himself, the same honour that is due to himself. He is to be worshipped as the true God, possessed of all divine perfections, the creator, preserver, proprietor, governor, saviour, and judge of the world.

That the honour here referred to, is really the honour of divine worship, is plain from the reasons on which the claim is founded. God is his proper Father; he is God’s proper Son; there is identity of nature. He is equal with God; he has divine powers and prerogatives; equally with the Father, he has the power of raising and quickening whom he will; equally with the Father, he is the ruler and judge of the universe. These are the grounds on which a claim is made, that the Son should be honoured as the Father.

It is added, “He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him.” It is the will of the Father, that all men should honour the Son as they honour himself; and if this will be not complied with, the Father is dishonoured. The Father wills to be honoured and worshipped through the Son; his will is to be worshipped by men as the Father of our Lord, and our Father in him. Now this cannot be done unless we honour the Son. Indeed the Father cannot be honoured in any other way than by honouring the Son. He who does not honour the Son, does not acknowledge God as the Father, such as he has manifested himself in his Son; he does not acknowledge the paternal love towards us manifested in sending his own Son; he does not place his confidence in the Father, just because he has not faith in the Son; he cannot love the Father, for he does not acknowledge the love of the Father. He cannot obey the Father, because he wants those aids, which can be supplied only by faith in the Son. It is in the Son that the Father manifests himself:—“He who has seen the Son, has seen the Father,”¹

¹ John xiv. 9.

and he who has not seen the Son, has not seen the Father. So closely connected are the worship of the Father and that of the Son, that the one cannot exist without the other.

The proper interpretation of the paragraph which follows, (verse 24-29), depends on the right resolution of the question, whether the leading words in it, "death," "life," and "resurrection," are to be understood literally or figuratively.¹

There can be no reasonable doubt, that "death," is often in the New Testament used to describe that state of moral corruption and spiritual inactivity in which all men are by nature; and "life," to describe that state of holy activity and enjoyment, into which they are brought by the faith of the Gospel; and that the transition from the one state into the other, is sometimes represented as a resurrection; and some interpreters have considered the passage before us as one of those in which, under these significant figures, the power of the doctrines of Christ, when understood and believed, to effect a great and most salutary change on the character and condition of mankind, is brought before the mind.

On carefully examining the passage, however, I am persuaded that the words are to be understood in their literal signification, and that they do not refer to the conversion of the irregenerate, but to the resurrection of the dead. The reasons which have induced me to form this judgment, are the following.

¹ This is one of the more difficult questions in exegesis. The mystical or spiritual interpretation is comparatively modern. It is that of most of the rationalistic interpreters, such as Anmon, Eckermann, and Eichorn. The literal is that adopted by the more ancient Greek and Latin interpreters, as Chrysostom and Tertullian, and by such modern interpreters, as Storr, Tittmann, and Schott. Some very good interpreters, as Calvin, Lampé, Lucké, and Neander, endeavour to conjoin the two interpretations; I think not very successfully. The only serious difficulty in the way of adopting the exegesis we think, upon the whole, the preferable one, rises out of the use of the perfect in the close of the 24th verse, where we would have expected the future; but in prophetic statements, the perfect often stands for the future, to indicate the absolute certainty of the event. As Tholuck says, "He who has become a believer in the Son is regarded by God as already holy and glorified for all eternity," Rom. viii. 30. A very good view of the arguments for both modes of interpretation is given by Tittmann *in loc.*

Unless the context absolutely requires it, we are never to depart from the literal signification of words and phrases, when they afford a true and consistent meaning.

On the principle of figurative interpretation, it seems impossible to attach distinct ideas to such expressions as, "all who are in their graves shall come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and some to the resurrection of damnation."

The context obviously not only admits of, but seems to require, the literal interpretation of these words. Jesus Christ had performed a miracle of mercy on the sabbath-day, and the Jewish rulers accused him of sabbath-violation. The question between him and them, referred to his right to perform works on a day set apart by Divine authority to cessation from labours. In answer to their objection he might have done, what he did on other occasions, have urged the character of the works he performed. It was a work of mercy, and therefore no violation of the law rightly understood. But he chose, as we have seen, to occupy other and higher ground. From his possession of the same divine power as that displayed by his Father in the upholding and governing the world, he argues his right of exercising that power on the sabbath-day, as well as on other days, just as his Father exercised it. The Jews understood this as claiming equality with God, and they seem rightly so to have understood it, for our Lord does not complain either of their misapprehending or misinterpreting his meaning. What follows, then, is our Lord's explanation and vindication of the assertion, which the Jews considered as blasphemy, that he was equal with God, that he had the same power that God has. To say, what according to the figurative mode of interpretation our Lord says, that the doctrine which he had been commissioned of God to teach, if understood and believed, would effect a salutary change in the character and condition of mankind, so great and wonderful, that nothing short of the resurrection of the

dead could afford an adequate figurative representation of it, would have been to state a truth, but a truth which seems to have no direct bearing on the obvious object of our Lord's discourse ; whereas to say, what the words, literally interpreted, plainly convey, that he was possessed of the same divine power with the Father,—power which he had manifested in the performance of miracles, and would still farther manifest in the performance of still greater miracles, immediately or very soon, in not only curing diseased men, but quickening dead men, and ultimately in raising to life all who had ever died,—this was just to make the assertion which the circumstance required, and which his previous statements led to expect.

On these grounds, we are disposed to prefer the literal interpretation of this passage, to the mystical, or even to the mixed interpretation of it. Let us proceed to examine it somewhat more closely.

“ Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him who sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation ; but is passed from death unto life.”¹ To “ hear,” is often, in Scripture, used to denote, to attend, to believe, to obey ; for example—“ This is my beloved Son, hear ye him.” He that hears Christ's word is just he who attends to, who believes, who obeys him, as a divine teacher, who considers all that he says as divinely true, and as divinely true because he says it.

To “ hear the word ” of Christ, and to “ believe on,” or to “ believe him who sent him,” is substantially the same thing, for our Lord himself says—“ My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me : He that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me.”

Now our Lord's assertion is, that every one who by receiving as true his doctrine, as the doctrine of a divinely commissioned teacher, gave credit to Him whose messenger he was, should become the subject of that divine power,

¹ John v. 24.

which he in common with his Father possessed. He "hath," that is, he shall assuredly have, "eternal life," he shall be made capable of, and shall in due time enter on, a state of everlasting holy activity and enjoyment. "He shall not come into condemnation." * The word rendered "condemnation,"¹ properly signifies 'judgment;' but here, as in many other parts of Scripture, especially of the Gospel by John, is equivalent to condemnation or punishment. The meaning is: 'He shall not be condemned, or punished. On the contrary, "he is passed," that is, shall pass, "from death to life." These words are often, perhaps ordinarily, explained of conversion; but, in their connection here, it seems more natural to explain them, of "the resurrection of life." He who hears Christ's words, and believes on him who sent him, is not exempted from death. "It is appointed to men once to die." The awful doom extends to all mankind:—"Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." "The body must die because of sin," the first sin of the first man. "But the spirit lives, because of" the free and full "justification," by the obedience unto the death of the second man, the Lord from heaven; and "he, who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, shall also quicken our mortal body." To all who have his word, and believe on him who sent him, death is but the way to life.

The declaration in the passage before us, seems nearly equivalent to the two following:—"This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day." "He that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die."²

But the hearers of our Lord, were not required to wait till they got into the world of spirits, to witness these greater things which the Son, in the exercise of that divine power

¹ *αἰώνιος*.² John vi. 40; xi. 25, 26.

* See Note A.

which equally belongs to him and to his Father, was to perform :—He adds, “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God ; and they that hear shall live.” ¹

These words are, we apprehend, a prediction of the miraculous resurrection of Jairus’ daughter, of the son of the widow of Nain, and of Lazarus, and it may be of others ; for we have no reason to think that all Christ’s miracles are recorded ; nay, we certainly know that he did so many other things besides those which are recorded, that, “ had they been written every one, I suppose,” says the Evangelist, “ the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.” ² “ The hour is coming, and now is,” that is, ‘ the appointed period is just at hand,’ “ when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live ;” that is, ‘ when I the Son of God, shall by a mere act of my will, expressed by a word of my mouth, restore to life those who are dead.’

How accurately does the event correspond to the prediction ! Hear the story of Jairus’ daughter :—“ While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead ; why troublest thou the Master any further ? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep ? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying.

¹ John v. 25.

² John xxi. 25.

And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha-cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel (I say unto thee), arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment.”¹ Hear the story of the widow’s only son:—“And it came to pass the day after, that he went into a city called Nain; and many of his disciples went with him, and much people. Now, when he came nigh to the gate of the city, behold, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow; and much people of the city was with her. And when the Lord saw her, he had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not. And he came and touched the bier: and they that bare him stood still. And he said, Young man, I say unto thee, Arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak. And he delivered him to his mother.”² Hear the story of Lazarus:—“Jesus therefore again groaning in himself, cometh to the grave. It was a cave, and a stone lay upon it. Jesus said, Take ye away the stone. Martha, the sister of him that was dead, saith unto him, Lord, by this time he stinketh; for he hath been dead four days. Jesus saith unto her, Said I not unto thee, that, if thou wouldest believe, thou shouldest see the glory of God? Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead was laid. And Jesus lifted up his eyes, and said, Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me. And when he had thus spoken, he cried with a loud voice, Lazarus, come forth. And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go.”³

Our Lord not only states that he would raise the dead,

Mark v. 35-42.

² Luke vii. 11-15.

³ John xi. 38-44.

by merely commanding them to arise, but he, in the plainest terms, informs us that he would do this in the exercise of that independent power of giving life which belongs, and can belong, to no creature, but which is common to him, and his Divine Father. "For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."¹

This is by far the most difficult passage in the whole of our Lord's discourse. At first sight, it seems to involve a contradiction. To have life "in himself," and to have it "given to him to have life in himself," seem incompatibilities. The life which he has, seems to be represented as at once independent and dependent, original and derived. Let us examine the passage attentively. We shall find that, while there may be some things obscure, there is much that is clear; and that, what is at first sight obscure, may, on closer inspection, lose much of its obscurity.

It is very plainly stated, that "the Son has life in himself," and that he "has life in himself, even as the Father hath life in himself." "Life," when attributed to God in the Scriptures, seems to denote the property of independent existence, the possessing life, in the highest sense of that word, and the power of communicating life to those who have it not, and of restoring it to those who have lost it, or been deprived of it. When we call God the living God, or say that in him is life, we mean that he is the source of life, the fountain of being, the creative, life-giving principle. "The Father has life *in himself*;" it belongs to his nature; he has received it of no one; it is an essential attribute of his necessarily existing nature: he so has life, that he can impart, withdraw, and restore it to whomsoever he pleases. He is the fountain of all life. All in earth and in heaven, who have life, have received it from him "in whom is life,"

¹ John v. 26.

“with whom is the fountain of life,” who “has life in himself.” They have not life in themselves. “In him they live, and move, and have their being.”

Now, the Son is said to have “life in himself,” that is, the Son is a possessor of independent existence. He derives his life from none; he has the power of communicating life according to his pleasure. “He has life in himself, even as the Father has life in himself.” All the life in the universe is as really from the Son as from the Father. He is equally with the Father the possessor of that independent existence, and that power of giving existence, which is one of the grand characteristics of Divinity. He and his Father are equally “the first, and the last, and the living one.” These principles are very clearly stated in the passage before us; they are in perfect accordance with the general doctrine of the Scripture; and our confidence in them is not to be at all affected by the difficulty which may attach to some of the other expressions in the passage before us.

The whole of the difficulty lies in the phrase:—“The Father hath given to the Son to have life in himself.” There is something very peculiar in this phraseology. It is not said, that “the Father hath given the Son life in himself,” but “he has given to the Son *to have* life,” or, *that he might have*,¹ “life in himself.” The first mode of expression would have distinctly stated a communication of life from the Father to the Son; and, had it been our Lord’s intention to express this idea, he would probably have adopted it as the simplest and most unequivocal method of expressing it. The second mode of expression, which is peculiar, seems intended to convey some other idea. What that is, we hope to be able by and by to make evident.

Most interpreters appear to have overlooked this peculiarity of expression, and have considered the words as expressive of what they have termed that eternal communication of

¹ *ἵνα*.

the Divine nature, which they consider as implied in the very nature of our Lord's sonship. I cannot find in the Scriptures any sanction to this language. I can attach no distinct idea to it. It seems to me a contradiction in terms. I know very good divines have spoken of the Father as the fountain of Deity; but, in doing so, they have, I apprehend, "darkened counsel by words without knowledge." A derived independent existence, a communicated original power, are certainly downright absurdities.

But, the expression is not, The Father hath given to the Son life in himself, or independent existence, and the power of giving existence to whomsoever he will; but, he has given to the Son "to *have* life in himself." The word *give* is often used in Scripture, as equivalent to, to appoint. The appointment of the Son to be the Messiah is repeatedly expressed by this word:—"Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people."¹ "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."² The Father has appointed the Son to have, or hold, life in himself. The word "gave" does not seem to refer to the life itself, but to the manner of having or holding it. The Father, as the head of the mediatorial economy, appoints the Son to hold and exercise that independent power of conferring life, which is the characteristic property of that divinity, of which they are equally possessed. He constitutes him the Fountain of divine life to mankind, because he is in himself adequate to this function. The idea seems materially the same as, when it is said, that "it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell"—"that the fulness of the Godhead should dwell in him bodily;" that so out "of this fulness we might all receive grace for grace"—superabounding grace. This appears to me the most satisfactory mode of explaining this somewhat difficult passage.

¹ Isa. lv. 4.

² John iii. 16.

That the words refer to a Divine appointment, having a reference to the mediatorial economy, is obvious from what follows: "and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."¹ To execute judgment is, we apprehend, to administer the government of the world, including, of course, the passing and executing final sentences on all intelligent beings. The Father has appointed the Son, in his mediatorial capacity, to be the ruler of the world; "he hath committed all things into his hand." He has appointed him to discharge functions, for the proper discharge of which, divine perfections are absolutely necessary; for what, short of divine power and wisdom, could enable a person to govern the universe?

It is added, he has done so, "because he is the Son of man." I have already had an opportunity of explaining to you the meaning of the appellation "the Son of man," when used as a descriptive appellation of the Messiah. The force of the particle rendered "because," has been variously explained. We are disposed to think the most probable method of interpretation is that which supposes, that there is a reference to the remarkable prophetic oracle recorded by the prophet Daniel, chap. vii. 13, 14. It is obvious that our Lord, though using the third person, is speaking of himself; and it is just as if he had said, The Father hath appointed *me* to be the ruler of the world, for I am the person to whom, according to the ancient oracles, a kingdom without limit and without end was to be committed.²

¹ John v. 27.

² Dr Campbell and many others take another view of the meaning of the phrase. They render it, and fairly enough, "Because he is a son of man." It is remarkable that this is the only place in the gospel in which the appellation is employed without the article. They consider the sentiment expressed as equivalent to—"for it suits the ends of Divine wisdom, that the Judge, as well as the Saviour of men, should be a man." This sentiment is undoubtedly a just one, though no *ψαλὸς ἄνθρωπος*, none but a man in union with God as the incarnate Son was, could have been fit for discharging the functions of such an office. Some of the reasons why the power of judgment was given to our Lord as a son of man, are very well assigned by Witsius in his "Exercitat. in Symb." Exercit. xxii § 9. Scholten "de appellatione τοῦ Τίου τοῦ Ἀνθρώπου," deserves also to be consulted.

Our Lord now directs the attention of his hearers to a still more remarkable manifestation which was to be made by him of the divine power which, equally with the Father, he possessed, and which, by the Father, he had been appointed to display:—"Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth: they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation."¹ That is, 'There is a period coming, when all who have died shall, by their being restored to life by the Son, find in their own experience that he has life in himself, as the Father has life in himself; and when it shall appear also, that all judgment is committed to the Son, by his sentencing those who have done good—who have complied with the Divine will respecting the salvation of men, by believing the truth, and living under its influence—to life, everlasting life; and by his sentencing them who have done evil—who have lived and died in a state of unquelled rebellion against God—to punishment, everlasting punishment; and by bestowing the rewards, and inflicting the punishment, to which he has respectively adjudged them.'

The only illustration this verse demands, or indeed admits, is to be drawn from parallel passages of Scripture, of which the following are a specimen:—"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first."² "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power."³ "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then

¹ John v. 28, 29.² 1 Thess. iv. 16.³ 2 Thess. i. 7-9.

shall he sit upon the throne of his glory : And before him shall be gathered all nations ; and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats : And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world : For I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me in : Naked, and ye clothed me : I was sick, and ye visited me : I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee ? or thirsty, and gave thee drink ? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in ? or naked, and clothed thee ? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee ? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels : For I was an hungered, and ye gave me no meat : I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink : I was a stranger, and ye took me not in : naked, and ye clothed me not : sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee ? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily, I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment : but the righteous into life eternal.”¹

“ He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still : and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still : and he that is holy, let him be holy still.

¹ Matth. xxv. 31-46.

And, behold, I come quickly ; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his works shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.”¹

Our Lord concludes as he had begun, by declaring, that in all the exertions of his power, and in all the acts of his government, he did nothing separate from the Father. “I can of mine own self do nothing : as I hear, I judge : and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me.”² ‘In doing all these things I act along with the Father,—our mind, and will, and operation are one. I can do nothing separate from him.’ “As I hear, I judge.” The word “hear,” is to be understood in the same way as the word “see” in the preceding context. ‘My judgment is in every case in exact accordance with the mind of the Father, of which I have the most intimate knowledge, a knowledge absolutely perfect, as arising from the possession of the same divine nature. And the justice of my judgments shall be made manifest, as all of them shall be made to appear to be guided, not by any regard to what might be considered my own private will and interest, but by a strict regard to the will of the Father, who hath appointed me to manifest the Divine perfections ; to do the Divine will ; “that God may be all in all.”’

In the preceding part of the discourse, Jesus Christ has unfolded the great fundamental truths of his religion, that he is a divine person, possessed of the distinctive nature and attributes of Deity ; and that he is the divinely authorised, and divinely qualified, Saviour, and Ruler, and Judge of mankind ; and he farther states that the belief of these prin-

¹ Rev. xxii. 11-15.

² John v. 30.

ciples is most intimately connected with the most important interests of mankind. "He that believes them shall be saved; he that believes them not shall be damned." In requiring his hearers to believe these doctrines, under sanctions so awful, our Lord made no unreasonable demand. He accompanied his statements of principle, with corresponding statements of evidence; and there is a beautiful proportion between the importance and the strangeness of the doctrines he taught, on the one hand; and, on the other, the power and variety of the proofs by which he supported them. He demands belief, unhesitating belief; but he does so only on the ground of having presented the most satisfactory credentials, that he was "sent and sealed" by the Father. To these credentials we find him soliciting the attention of his hearers in that paragraph which now comes before us for consideration. The substance of that paragraph may be thus stated: 'Of the truth of these principles, strange and even blasphemous as they may appear to your prejudiced minds, you have been presented with varied and most conclusive evidence, and should you reject them, your conduct in doing so will be altogether inexcusable.'

II. THE EVIDENCE.

Our Lord begins with stating, that he did not expect these statements to be credited on his own unconfirmed assertion. "If I bear witness of myself, my witness is not true."¹ These words are plainly to be understood in a limited sense; Jesus did bear witness of himself, and his testimony was true; and we find him asserting on another occasion, when this saying of his had apparently been retorted on him by his opponents,—“Though I bear record of myself, my record is true.”² The limitations under which our Lord's assertion is to be understood, are easily defined. It has been justly remarked,³ that in all countries where

¹ John v. 31.

² John viii. 14.

³ Campbell.

there are standing laws, and a regular constitution, there is what is called a forensic or juridical use of certain terms, which differs considerably from the familiar use of the same words. To be guilty, properly signifies, to have perpetrated a crime ; but in the forensic use of the term, he only is said to be guilty against whom a crime has been proved by legal evidence. There is a similar distinction between the ordinary, and the forensic sense of the word here rendered "true." In the latter sense it is equivalent to valid or trustworthy. It is held that a man's unsupported testimony in reference to anything that concerns himself, is not in ordinary cases to be considered as evidence. It may be true, but it must be confirmed by other evidence before it can be admitted to be true. Our Lord's assertion then is, ' Were there no evidence for the statements which I have just made, but my own unsupported declaration, they would not deserve credit. It were unreasonable to demand belief for such important and such strange statements, on the simple word of him whom they principally concern.'

But our Lord's testimony was supported by a variety of the most satisfactory evidences. "There is another that beareth witness of me ; and I know that the witness which he witnesseth of me is true." ¹

The word "true," here occurs in the same sense as in the previous verse. It is as if our Lord had said :—' I do not urge my own unsupported declaration as valid evidence, but there is another person who has given testimony to the same effect, whose declaration must be sustained as valid evidence.' It has been a question among interpreters, who that other witness is to whom our Lord here appeals. Some consider the reference to be to John the Baptist ; others, to the Father. Those who take the latter view of the subject, consider the following to be the train of thought :—' I do not claim belief to these declarations on my own unsup-

¹ John v. 32.

ported affirmation. They are supported by the testimony of one, whose credibility is far above all question ; I might appeal to the testimony of John, whose evidence ought to have much weight with you, considering the high estimation in which he was generally held by you. But I have no need of the support of his, or indeed of any human, testimony, though for your advantage I advert to it. For the evidence of the statements I make, I appeal to my Father, whom you call your God, to the testimony he has given in the works which he performed by me, in the voice from the most excellent glory, and the supernatural appearance which accompanied it, and in the declarations contained in those writings which you acknowledge to be his word.' The very emphatic manner in which our Lord speaks of that "other" witness, as one whose testimony he knew to be valid and trustworthy, and his statement, that he referred to John's testimony, not because he needed it, but because it might have a salutary influence on the minds of his hearers, render it, in my opinion, all but certain that this view of the meaning is the just one.¹

"Ye sent unto John, and he bare witness unto the truth."² Our Lord here plainly refers to the testimony which John bore to him as the Messiah, when the Jewish Sanhedrim sent a deputation to inquire into the nature of his pretensions. Of this we have an account in the first chapter of this gospel :—"And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou ? And he confessed, and denied not ; but confessed, I am not the Christ. And they asked him, What then ? Art thou Elias ? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet ? And he answered, No. Then said they unto them, Who art thou ? that we may give an answer

¹ "Αλλος cannot be the Baptist (see John v. 34), as Chrysostom and Euthymius think, but is the Father. Christ calls him "Αλλος to excite their attention. John viii. 18.—THOLOUK.

² John v. 33.

to them that sent us; what sayest thou of thyself? He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias. And they which were sent, were of the Pharisees. And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptisest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet? John answered them, saying, I baptise with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not; He it is, who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose. These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptising. The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world! This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me; for he was before me. And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptising with water. And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him. And I knew him not; but he that sent me to baptise with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptiseth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw and bare record that this is the Son of God."¹ This was not a solitary instance in which John testified, publicly declared, our Lord to be the divine, and the divinely appointed and qualified, Saviour promised to the fathers. A still more explicit declaration on these subjects was made to his disciples, when they came complaining of the growing popularity of Jesus. "John answered and said, A man can receive nothing except it be given him from heaven. Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him,

¹ John i. 19-34.

rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice. This my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all ; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth : he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth ; and no man receiveth his testimony. He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true. For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God : for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life : and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life ; but the wrath of God abideth on him." ¹

Our Lord does not mention John's testimony as if he needed it, but because it was fitted to make a salutary impression on the minds of his hearers. " But I receive not testimony from men, but these things I say that ye may be saved." ²

To " receive " here, as in verse 44, where it is interchanged with the word " seek," is equivalent ' to grasp at,' as if he had said, ' I am not anxious to build my cause on human testimony : but I mention this circumstance for your advantage.' John's testimony was likely to have—most certainly ought to have had—much weight with the great body of the Jews, who, with scarcely any exception, held him as a prophet ; and especially with the Sanhedrim, who, if he had been a false prophet, should have punished him according to law. His testimony should have been sustained as valid by them, as it was given in reply to a solemn inquiry instituted by themselves, and they had never proceeded against him as if he had borne false witness.

Our Lord desired the salvation of the Jews ; he well knew that they could be saved only through the belief of the truth ;

¹ John iii. 27-36.

² John v. 34.

and he notices John's testimony, not, by any means, as in itself the strongest evidence he had to bring forward, but as evidence peculiarly fitted to make an impression on their minds. "He was," says our Lord, "a burning and shining light," or he was "the lighted and shining lamp;" and "ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light;"¹ 'He was a teacher of truth, distinguished by the fervour of his zeal, and the clearness of his statements respecting the Messiah, when compared with the prophetic oracles; and "ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light." It is plain that the Baptist was, in the earlier stages of his ministry, highly popular as a teacher. Vast multitudes followed him, listening to his discourses, and submitting to his baptism. The phrase "for a season" refers either to the comparatively short period of John's ministry,—'he was a bright but a passing meteor,'—or rather to the still shorter period of his popularity; for there is reason to believe that his doctrines became less popular as they became better understood; that many rejoiced in him as the herald of Messiah the Prince, who turned with disgust from him as the supporter of Jesus of Nazareth. The circumstance of John's high qualifications and character as a teacher is noticed by our Lord as a reason why his testimony should be accounted true or trustworthy by the Jews, *q. d.*, 'My claims, in all their extent, were admitted and proclaimed by one whom, for a season, you honoured as one of the most illustrious of public teachers.'

"But," continues our Lord, "I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me."² The whole of what follows is our Lord's account of the testimony of God, as contrasted with the testimony of John, or of men.

The first divine testimony is that given by the "*works*"

¹ John v. 35.

² John v. 36.

which the Saviour did—"works which the Father gave him to finish" or perform. Some have supposed that, by these works, we are to understand all that our Lord did in the execution of the great office of Saviour of men, to which he was divinely appointed, and for which he was divinely qualified; and there can be no doubt, that the whole of his work, especially when compared with the prophetic testimony respecting it, affords satisfactory proof of his divine mission. At the same time, our Lord's *miracles* are often called his "works," *e. g.* "Now, when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples."¹ "His brethren therefore said unto him, Depart hence, and go into Judea, that thy disciples also may see the works that thou doest." "Jesus answered and said unto them, I have done one work, and ye all marvel."² "Jesus answered them, I told you, and ye believed not: the works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me:" "If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not. But if I do, though ye believe not me, believe the works; that ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him."³ And our Lord often appeals to these miracles as evidence of his divine mission. We apprehend, therefore, that, in the use of the word "works" here, there is, if not an exclusive, at least a principal reference to them.

Our Lord's declaration, then, is equivalent to, 'God has testified my divine mission by the miracles which I have wrought, and which nothing but divine power could have accomplished.' Miracles are not a direct proof of the truth of doctrines, but they are a direct, and indeed it would appear the only satisfactory, evidence of a divine mission. The place which miracles hold in the system of christian evidence, is very clearly pointed out by Nicodemus:—"Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher sent from God, for no man can do these miracles which thou doest except God be

¹ Matth. xi. 2.² John vii. 3, 21.³ John x. 25, 37, 38.

- with him." The works done by our Lord were obviously such as divine power alone could have performed. They were the seal of God ; and, when we consider his holiness, and justice, and benignity, we cannot for a moment suspect that he would attach that seal to imposture. ¹

But the miracles performed by our Lord were not the only nor the most direct evidence given in favour of him by his Father :—" The Father himself who hath sent me, hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape." ² It is a question among expositors to what particular testimony our Lord here refers. Many, perhaps most, seem to consider the reference as made to the testimony contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, which are expressly appealed to in the thirty-ninth and succeeding verses ; and they view the words in the close of the thirty-seventh verse as merely introductory to the bringing forward this evidence, *q. d.*, ' Though my Father has not appeared in human form, and given evidence with an audible voice, yet, in his word, which ye profess highly to value, he has given testimony concerning me.' Others, with whom we are disposed to coincide, consider the words in the thirty-seventh and thirty-eighth verses as referring to the remarkable testimony given to our Lord at his baptism by a voice from heaven, and a supernatural glorious appearance. In this case, the words must be read, not affirmatively, but interrogatively :—" Did ye never hear his voice, or see his form, or have ye not his word abiding in you, that ye believe not him whom he hath sent ?" ^b

The following is the account of this remarkable testimony :—" Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan to John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to

¹ A condensed view of the force of the miracles of our Lord, as evidencing his doctrine, may be found in " The Ministry of Christ—its Details and its Results."

² John v. 37.

^b See Note B.

me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”¹ The supernatural luminous appearance, commonly called the Shekinah, which was the symbol of the Divine presence, is, in Exodus xxiv. 17, called “the sight of the glory of the Lord,”² or the glorious form of Jehovah. It is, as if he said, ‘Did not an articulate voice from heaven declare me the beloved Son of the Father, in whom he was well pleased; and was not this declaration accompanied by the appearance of that supernatural light which, from the beginning of the Jewish economy at least, has been the symbol of the Divine presence?’ Could more direct testimony be given to me by God? How is it that ye do not then receive me? “Is it because ye have not the word of my Father, which he then spake, abiding in you?”³ that is, ‘Have ye forgotten the solemn declaration which he then made?’ Ah, “Ye have not his word abiding in you, for him whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.”⁴

But, besides the testimony borne to our Lord by his Father in the miracles which he performed, and in the supernatural voice and appearance which distinguished his baptism, He appeals to the evidence of his divine mission, which was to be derived from the Old Testament Scriptures, which were, and were admitted by the Jews to be, given by inspiration of God:—“Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.”⁵

¹ Matth. iii. 13-17.

² Τὸ ὄψος τῆς δόξης Κυρίου.

³ “John is fond of the word *μῦθος*.” 1 John iii. 9; ii. 27, 28. 2 John ii. 9.

John xv. 7.—THOLUCK.

⁴ John v. 38.

⁵ John v. 39.

These words admit of three renderings. They may be rendered indicatively, "Ye search the Scriptures;" or imperatively, as our translators have rendered them, "Search the Scriptures;" or interrogatively, "Do ye search the Scriptures?" We are inclined to prefer the latter mode of rendering them, "Do ye search the Scriptures, because in them ye think ye have eternal life? They testify of me, and will ye not come to me, that ye may have life?"

The Jews professed to have a very high regard for the Old Testament Scriptures. They, especially the doctors of the Sanhedrim, whom our Lord was now addressing, searched and studied them. They considered them as the only really valuable literature, holding in contempt the Grecian and Roman philosophy. They thought that in them "they had eternal life;" that is, that they afforded the adequate means of attaining true and permanent happiness. 'Now,' says our Lord, 'These Scriptures, which you profess so highly to estimate—these Scriptures are the Father's testimony concerning me. I am the great subject of the Old Testament revelation. To me all the prophets bear witness. There is such a minute and accurate correspondence between what I am, what I teach, what I do, what I suffer, and what, according to these Scriptures, the Messiah was to be, and teach, and do, and suffer, that, were you not blinded by prejudice, you could not but see and acknowledge, that I am He of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write; and yet, will ye not come to me, that you may have life? Though the books you yourselves admit to be sacred, and to contain the only true account of the way to happiness; though these sacred books clearly testify that I am the true author of happiness, the all-sufficient and only Saviour, will you yet, after all, refuse to acknowledge me? will you not come to me in the character that belongs to me, according to these Scriptures, as "the way, the truth, and the life," that you may obtain those blessings, which I, and I alone, can bestow?

Such is our Lord's account of the testimony of the Father, to the divinity of his mission, and the truth of his doctrines. The substance of his statement may be thus given. 'I do not require you to believe, what I have just now asserted, as to my being the divine, and the divinely appointed and qualified Saviour and Ruler of men, on my unsupported assertion. I know a person's testimony in his own cause is not accounted valid. I require you to believe this statement, on evidence which is altogether irrefragable. I might appeal to what John the Baptist said of me, and his evidence ought to have much weight with you. But I do not need his testimony, and I advert to it in passing, merely because I think it may have some influence on your minds. The testimony I appeal to, is infinitely superior to that of John. It is that of my Father, "of whom ye say, that he is your God." He has given testimony to me in a variety of ways. He has testified of me by the miracles I perform. These could not be performed but by divine power; and they are his seal to my credentials as a divine messenger. He has testified of me, by an audible voice from heaven, and by that supernatural brightness which is the well-known symbol of his peculiar presence; and he has testified of me in those sacred books, which, you admit to be given by his inspiration.'

III.—APPLICATION.

In the judgments which men form and express of the characters of others, they often unconsciously make a manifestation of their own. In scrutinising the motives which have led another to a particular course of conduct, they often unfold the principles which have a governing influence over their own actions. External conduct enables us to judge of inward character, by affording us the means of conjecturing the motives in which it originates; and the way in which we learn to argue from action to

principle, from conduct to motive—is by reflecting, What would have induced us to do such an action, or to follow such a course of conduct? It is in consequence of this, that a selfish man is constantly disposed to trace an apparently generous action to some interested motive; that none are so uncharitable in their judgments, as those who have the lowest claims on the good opinion or even forbearance of others; and none so much disposed to form excuses for the faults of their neighbours, as those who have least occasion for the indulgence in return. A bad man is generally disposed to trace even a good action, to an unworthy principle; while a good man readily gives his neighbour credit for good intentions, even when he may not be able altogether to approve of the wisdom or propriety of the action, to which the intention has given birth.

Of this tendency to judge of others by ourselves, we have an example in the opinion formed of our Lord, by the Jewish rulers. The leading principle of their minds was the desire of human approbation and applause; and when they perceived Jesus manifesting an eager desire, that men should embrace his doctrines and become his disciples, conceiving that he was animated by motives and principles similar to those which influenced and guided their own conduct, they considered him as an ambitious man—fond of fame and of power. They were incapable of forming a true estimate of his character, for they were utter strangers to that disinterested regard for the honour of God and the happiness of men, which formed its principal elements. They had no experience of the influence of such motives over their own minds, and for that very reason, they were disposed to trace our Lord's conduct to any other motive, rather than the true one.

It is a peculiarity in our Lord's discourses, which I have more than once had occasion to refer to, that he often so frames his speech, as not so much to answer what men had said, as to meet the workings of their mind, to show that he

was perfectly aware of what was going on within. An attention to this remark, will often make what is at first obscure in our Lord's discourses appear quite plain; and will show, that transitions which seem harsh, are indeed quite natural. We apprehend we have such a case now before us. Jesus had made a clear and strong statement of the truth with regard to himself, as the divine and divinely appointed, and qualified Saviour and ruler of mankind; he had brought forward the evidence of the justness of his claims, afforded by the three-fold testimony of his Divine Father, in the miracles which he performed by the divine power, in the supernatural appearances which accompanied his baptism, and in the Old Testament Scriptures; and he had expressed his regret and astonishment, that after all, his countrymen would not come to him that they might have life. From all this the Jewish Sanhedrim, before whom he stood, judging of him by themselves, concluded, that like them he loved the praise of men. Our Lord knowing their thoughts disclaims the unworthy motive, and proceeds to unfold the true reasons why they so obstinately refused to receive his doctrine as a divine message, and himself as a divine messenger.

"I receive not honour from men."¹ It is true in the ordinary sense of the word "receive," that Jesus did not receive honour from men. Not honour, but shame and disgrace were what he received:—"He was despised and rejected of men;" "Men hid as it were their faces from him, he was despised, and not esteemed."² But it seems obvious that the word "receive" here, as in the thirty-fourth verse, and again in the forty-fourth verse, is used as equivalent to "seek," or "catch at." "I am not desirous of obtaining honour from men. When I state my claims, and complain that you disregard them, it is not because I wish to ingratiate myself with you; not because I covet your approba-

¹ John v. 41.

² Isa. liii. 3.

tion or that of any man, or set of men.' He did not need their sanction: He could receive no honour from their applause. His object was to secure the approbation of his Divine Father, by faithfully executing the commission with which he was intrusted; and so far as they were concerned, his desire was not that he should be applauded by them, but that they should be saved by him. If he regretted, and he did most deeply regret their obstinate unbelief and impenitence, it was for their own sakes, not for his own. Such was the unearthly, unambitious spirit of our Lord, and such should be the spirit of all his ministers. All who are "allowed of God, to be put in trust with the Gospel," should "so speak, not as pleasing men but God, who trieth the hearts;" they ought "not to use flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness; nor ought they of men to seek glory;" for if they "seek to please men, they cannot be the servants of Christ."¹

Indeed, the doctrines of our Lord were little fitted to secure to him who taught them honour from men; and the fearless, honest manner in which he stated them, was calculated to do anything but ingratiate him with men of worldly and corrupt minds. When our Lord made the statement, 'Notwithstanding the abundant evidence there is of the truth of my claims in books, the divine origin of which you yourselves admit, you *will* not, you are indisposed, to come to me, that you may have life,' it was not that he eagerly wished their approbation, but it was because he well knew that the principles which governed their minds and hearts, so long as they maintained their influence, made it morally impossible that they should recognise his claims, or receive his message.

"But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you."² The love of God is the vital principle of true religion, and is used here for religion generally. The Jewish

¹ 1 Thess. ii. 4-6. Gal. i. 10.

² John v. 42.

rulers professed to be very religious. Their very rejection of the claims of our Lord, was covered by the cloak of pretended regard for religion. They persecuted him, and would have wished to put him to death, because he broke the Sabbath-day; and because in his defence of himself, he had, by calling God his own Father, made himself equal to God. But in reality they were irreligious men, destitute alike of the true knowledge, and the love of God. They were "of this world," they were "from beneath." They were thoroughly worldly men—men, looking not at "the things unseen and eternal;" but at "the things which are seen and temporal." They had no relish for that spiritual salvation which he came to reveal, to obtain, and to bestow; and this was the true reason why they would not come to him. And so is it still. The reason why men, to whom the claims of Christ and christianity are addressed, reject them, is to be found, not in the want of evidence on the side of these claims; but on the utter indisposition on their part to attend to these claims. They have not the love of God in them.

But how did our Lord know this? Was there not something uncharitable in tracing the conduct of the Jewish rulers to such a motive? No. He who used these words, is "He who searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of men; who needs not that any should testify to him of man; for he knows what is in man."¹ But, besides, the conduct of the Jews completely warranted the conclusion. Our Lord "came from God,"—gave the clearest evidence of coming from God. He was "God manifest in flesh." "He and the Father were" so "one," that "he who had seen him had seen the Father." Yet he was contemptuously rejected by them. Can those love the prince who condemn his accredited ambassador? Can those love the Father, who treat with contumely and cruelty his only begotten Son? If they had loved him who begat, they would

¹ Rev. ii. 23. John ii. 25.

have loved him who was begotten of him. Their want of love to God had been manifested in their rejection of him who came to them in his name; and was still farther to be manifested in the ready reception they were to give to persons, who should come without anything like satisfactory evidence of being his authorised messengers.

"I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."¹ Jesus came in his Father's name; that is, invested with his authority, and bringing satisfactory evidence, that he was invested with his authority. Yet, notwithstanding all this, they did not receive him. Instead of receiving him, they rejected him as an impostor; they punished him as a blasphemer. Could they more clearly prove, that the love of God was not in them, than by thus treating him whom he had "sent and sealed."

Their want of the love of God was to be equally manifested in the welcome reception they were to give to men, pretending to the honours of Messiahship, but exhibiting no satisfactory evidence of their divine mission. "If another shall come to you in his own name, him ye will receive."² There is here a prediction of the false Messiahs, by whom the Jewish people were to be deluded. These men in pretence, came in God's name; but in reality they came in their own. They ran, he did not send them. They could exhibit no satisfactory evidence of their divine mission. They could not point, like Jesus, to the blind seeing, and the deaf hearing, and the lame walking, and the dumb speaking, and the dead living, and say, "The works which I do, bear witness of me." None could say of them, We know "that ye are teachers sent of God, for no man could do these works which ye do, except God were with him." They

¹ John v. 43.

² "Since the advent of Christ, there have appeared among the Jews sixty-four false Messiahs, by whom they have suffered themselves to be deceived."—THOLUCK.

could not point to a series of fulfilled ancient oracles, and say, The spirit of prophecy is our testimony. Nor could any one say of any of them, with even the slightest appearance of truth,—“This is *he*, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets did write.” In the carnality of their views, and in the wickedness of their conduct, many of them gave evidence, that they could not possibly be divine messengers ; and yet, such pretenders to messiahship were readily received, just because their carnal views corresponded with the carnal views of their countrymen.

Our Lord goes on to state, that with their present views, it was not to be expected, it was indeed morally impossible, that such a teacher as he was, should be cordially received ; or such doctrines as his were, could be really believed by them. “How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only.”¹

“Honour” here, is approbation—good opinion ; and our Lord’s statement is, that while they made it their leading object to obtain the approbation and good opinion of each other, and remained careless of obtaining the approbation of God, it was not to be expected that they would admit his divine mission, or believe his doctrines. To acknowledge Jesus of Nazareth,—a poor despised man, who declared distinctly, that his kingdom was not of this world,—as the Messiah, was to incur the contemptuous scorn, and the malignant persecution of the influential classes among the Jews ; and was that to be expected from men who, entirely occupied with things seen and temporal, considered the approbation of the wise and powerful as an object of the highest value ? If indeed they had had a due impression of the infinite value of divine approbation, then they would have seen, that though the reception of Jesus as the Messiah, might bring down on them contempt, and scorn, and persecution, still, since

¹ John v. 44.

his credentials were abundantly satisfactory, it was their duty, it was their interest, to receive him. But in the entire absence of the last of these principles, and while the first of them held undivided sway in their minds, how could they welcome a Messiah who had no worldly preferments to bestow, whose appearance was as mean as his doctrine was humiliating; for whom they must expect to have their names "cast out as evil," and probably be made to "suffer the loss of all things?"

Our Lord concludes, by intimating to them, that they must give an account of their rejection of him before the tribunal of God, and that they would meet there as their accuser, the legislator of whom they were accustomed to boast, and in whom they placed their confidence. "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: There is one who accuseth you, even Moses in whom ye trust."¹

These words, "Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father," may be viewed as a declaration that the design of our Lord's mission was not vindictive, but merciful. He came not to condemn, but to pardon—not to punish, but to save. His office was not that of an accuser, but of an intercessor. When he spoke to the Jews, he plainly told them of their sins and of their dangers; but when he spoke of them to his Father, he lamented their infatuation, and prayed for their forgiveness. "He shall make intercession for the transgressors," said the ancient oracle; and, in the fulfilment of this, our Saviour's last breath was spent in prayer for his murderers. "Father forgive them, for they know not what they do." Or the words may be interpreted on the same principle as the following and similar passages:—"I will have mercy and not sacrifice." "It was not you, but God who sent me hither." In this case, they are equivalent to 'Do not think that I will be your only or your chief accuser. Though I should not accuse you, your con-

¹ John v. 45.

demnation is certain; accusation will come from a quarter you are little thinking of. Moses, in whom ye trust, will accuse you and condemn you.'

The Jews had a superstitious trust in Moses. They expected him to appear along with the Messiah, and to assist him in accomplishing their deliverance. They also, at least in later ages, trusted in the intercession of Moses for the acceptance of their prayers. For the doctrine of the intercession of saints as mediators seems to have been borrowed by the apostate christian church, from the apostate Jewish church. The trust our Lord refers to was likely, however, rather a trust in his writings than in his person. They thought that in them they had eternal life. They made their boast in the law. Their language was—"We are Moses' disciples, we know that God spake by Moses." But our Lord assures them that this very Moses would be their accuser.

Moses may be considered as the accuser of the Jews in a variety of ways. His law, of which they were proud, had often been violated by them, and they had exposed themselves to the punishment it denounces against its violators. In his writings, especially in the prophetic song in the 32d chapter of Deuteronomy, the contemporaries of our Lord are described and condemned. But the manner in which Moses was to accuse them, referred to by our Lord, was obviously this: Moses is a witness to the justness of our Lord's claims, and, of course, a witness against those who rejected them. That this was our Lord's meaning seems plain from what follows: "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me."¹

Moses wrote of our Lord. In Moses' writings are recorded some very remarkable prophecies of the Messiah, such as the first promise, the promise to Abraham, the dying blessing of Jacob on the tribe of Judah, and possibly also the predic-

¹ John v. 46.

tion of Balaam, "Behold a star shall arise out of Jacob." Moses himself also uttered a remarkable prophecy respecting the Messiah. "The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken."¹ He instructed them in the signs of true and false prophets. The whole of the sacrificial economy had a reference to the Messiah. Had the Jews believed Moses, they would have believed Jesus. In one sense the Jews did believe Moses—they had no doubt of his divine mission. In another sense they did not believe him—they did not understand his writings; and, therefore, they could not believe them. Had they properly understood Moses' writings, and firmly believed them, the reception of Jesus as the Messiah would have been a matter of course.

"But," added our Lord, "if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"² We are not to understand these words as if they intimated that Moses is worthy of greater credit than our Lord, or that our Lord's divine mission is not established on evidence altogether independent of Moses' testimony. They merely intimate that nothing but a rejection of Jesus' claims was to be expected from persons who, through ignorance and unbelief, paid no attention to the declarations of a writer whom they acknowledged as inspired.

It is to be feared that there are too many nominal Christians, who will be found at last involved in a similar condemnation with the Jews. These are weighty words of the judicious Scott: "How many are there who trust in their attachment to some form of doctrine, or to some renowned head of a party, who no more enter into the meaning of these doctrines, or into the views of the persons whose names they bear, than the Jews believed the words of Moses, or entered into his views of the prefigured and predicted Messiah. The creeds and formularies of many sects and

¹ Deut. xviii. 15.

² John v. 47.

establishments suffice for the condemnation of vast multitudes who glory in belonging to them as members or ministers; and it is well if the sermons many preach, and the books which they publish, do not appear in judgment against them to accuse them of not believing and practising what they preached and printed."

Note A, p. 97.

Præteritum, *μεταβίβηκε*, est præteritum propheticum et vim futuri obtinet hic, ut Jo. i. 15. KUINOEL. I demur to this "ut," &c. There can, however, be no doubt that the "enallage temporum" is very frequent with the Evangelist John. We need not go farther than the immediate context to prove this. Some Latin codices render the word "transibit," indicating not how they read, but how they understood it. I am disposed to think the declaration refers to an event, future when the declaration was made, yet past, in reference to the future event indicated in the immediately preceding clause. He shall not enter into condemnation, or punishment, and the reason is, "he has already passed from death into life." The passage in 1 John iii. 14, where the same phrase occurs, though it may be interpreted in the same way as in the case before us, will seem to many more naturally to refer to conversion; and it is not without some hesitation that we come to the conclusion that our exegesis is the more probable.

Note B, p. 114.

CAMPBELL translates this passage thus:—"Did ye never hear his voice, or see his form? Or have ye forgotten his declaration, that ye believe not him whom he hath commissioned?" And he defends his translation in the following able note:—

"The reader will observe, that the two clauses which are rendered in the English Testament as declarations, are, in this

version, translated as questions. The difference in the original is only in the pointing. That they ought so to be read, we need not, in my opinion, stronger evidence than that they throw much light upon the whole passage, which, read in the common way, is both dark and ill connected. See an excellent note on this passage, from Mr Turner of Wakefield (Priestley's Harmony, Sect. xl.) Our Lord here refers them to the testimony given of him at his baptism, when the Holy Spirit descended on him in a visible form, and when God, with an audible voice, declared him to be his beloved Son, and our lawgiver, whom we ought to hear and obey. What has chiefly contributed to mislead interpreters in regard to the import of this sentence, is the resemblance which it bears to what is said, ch. i. 18, Θεὸν οὐδεὶς ἑώρακεν πώποτε, *no one ever saw God*; and ch. vi. 46, οὐχ ὅτι τὸν πατέρα τὸν ἑώρακε, *not that any one hath seen the Father*. There is, however, a difference in the expressions; for it is not said here, οὗτε τὸν πατέρα, but οὗτε εἶδος αὐτοῦ ἑώρακατε. This, it may be thought, as it seems to ascribe a body to God, must be understood in the same way; for we are told, Deut. iv. 12, that, when the Lord spake to the people out of the fire, they saw no similitude. Of this they are again reminded, verse 15. But the word in the Septuagint is, in both places, not εἶδος, but *μοῖωμα*, which, in scriptural use, appears to denote a figure so distinct and permanent, as that it may be represented in stone, wood, or metal. Now, though this is not to be attributed to God, the sacred writers do not scruple to call the visible symbol which God, on any occasion, employs for impressing men more strongly with a sense of his presence, εἶδος αὐτοῦ, which (for want of a better term) I have rendered, *his form*. Thus the Evangelist Luke says, ch. iii. 22, in relating that singular transaction here alluded to, that the Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus, σωματικῶς εἶδει, *in a bodily form*. Thus, also, the word εἶδος is applied to the appearances which God made to men, under the Mosaic dispensation.

His appearance in fire upon Mount Sinai, is called by the Seventy, Ex. xxiv. 17, τὸ εἶδος τῆς δόξης τοῦ κυρίου; in our Bible, *the sight of the glory of the Lord*. In like manner, the word εἶδος is applied to the symbol of the Divine presence, which the

Israelites enjoyed in the wilderness; the *cloud* which covered the tabernacle in the day-time, and appeared as *fire* in the night, Num. ix. 15, 16. And, to mention but one other instance, the display which he made to Moses, when he conversed with him face to face, is, in the English Translation, said to be *apparently*, Num. xii. 8; but, in the Septuagint, *ἐν εἰδεῖ*, that is, in a form or visible figure. Thus, in the language of Scripture, there is a manifest difference between *seeing* God—which no man ever did, he being in himself a pure spirit—and seeing *his form*, τὸ εἶδος αὐτοῦ, the appearance which, at any time, in condescension to the weakness of his creatures, he pleases to assume. Another evidence, if necessary, might be brought to show that there was no intention here to express the invisibility of the divine nature, and is as follows: the clause which appears to have been so much misunderstood, is coupled with this other, οὐτε φωνὴν ἀκηκόατε πῶποτε. Can we imagine that the impossible would have been thus conjoined with what is commonly mentioned as a privilege often enjoyed by God's people, and to which their attention is required as a duty? For, though we are expressly told, that *no man ever saw God*, it is nowhere said that no man ever heard his voice. Nay, in the very place above quoted, Deut. iv. 12, where we are informed that the people saw no *similitude*, ὁμοίωμα, it is particularly mentioned that they heard *the voice*.

“To conclude: there is the greater probability in the explanation which I have given of the words, as all the chief circumstances attending that memorable testimony at his baptism, are exactly pointed out—the miraculous voice from heaven, the descent of the Holy Spirit in a bodily form, and the declaration itself then given. Dr Clarke seems to have had some apprehension of this meaning; for though, in his paraphrase, he explains the words in the usual way, he, in a parenthesis, takes notice of the two striking circumstances, the voice and the form, at our Lord's baptism.” Dr Campbell is not singular in this view: Trinius and Moldenhauer have given the same interpretation.

EXPOSITION IV.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATTHEW V. VI. VII.

INTRODUCTION.

WE come now to that admirable discourse, or series of discourses, commonly termed "The Sermon on the Mount." It is a question with harmonists and interpreters, whether the discourses recorded in the 5th, 6th, and 7th chapters of Matthew, and those in the 6th and 7th chapters of Luke, are two relations of the same discourse, or distinct discourses delivered at different times. There are difficulties connected with either mode of answering the question ; but, upon the whole, I am disposed to think that the preponderance of evidence is on the side of their being different discourses delivered at a considerable distance of time from each other.¹

There is indeed a strong similarity ; but still there is a marked difference, both in the discourses, and in the circumstances in which they were delivered. There are many things in the sermon recorded by Matthew, not to be found in the sermon recorded by Luke, and some things in the sermon recorded by Luke, not to be found in the sermon recorded by Matthew. Statements, that at first view seem very similar, when examined, are found so different, that you cannot suppose them to be different reports of the same state-

¹ Doddridge is of our opinion, which is supported too by Venema, Whitby, Blair, Macknight, Hess, Ferf, Greswell, and very lately by Lange, whose writings Archdeacon Hare pronounces "among the most valuable in modern German theology."

ment. The sermon recorded in Matthew, was delivered before the healing of the leper. The sermon recorded by Luke, seems to have been delivered after that miracle. The sermon recorded in Matthew was delivered before Matthew's call to be a disciple. The sermon recorded in Luke was delivered after the twelve apostles were called to their peculiar office. The sermon in Matthew was delivered from a mountain; the sermon recorded in Luke was spoken in the plain. Instead of eight beatitudes, as there are in the sermon recorded by Matthew, there are only four in the sermon recorded by Luke, and these not by any means of equivalent meaning with those which they most resemble. The only circumstance which appears to me a weighty one in the opposite scale is, that the account of the healing of a centurion's servant follows immediately the delivery of both discourses. Some interpreters have supposed that the two narratives refer to two different events; and there are, without doubt, not only circumstances mentioned in the one narrative, that are omitted in the other; but there are circumstances in the one narrative which there is some difficulty in reconciling with circumstances detailed in the other. It is just one of those cases which not unfrequently occur in our attempts to harmonise the gospel history; that is, to place in one consistent successive series, all the events recorded by the four evangelists; there are difficulties on both sides, and all we can do, is to choose the side which has the fewest, and the least considerable ones. Judging on this principle, we are disposed to think, that as our Lord, like his apostle, found, that for him "to say the same things was not grievous, while for his auditors it was safe," so the discourses, though having much in common, were delivered at different times, and in different circumstances.

Our Lord had before preached in the synagogues; but as probably no house could contain the multitudes which had assembled on this occasion, he "ascended a mountain," and being elevated above the people, he sat down, according to the

ordinary custom of the Jewish teachers, and in that posture taught the people. His disciples seem to have sat next to him, and the crowd around them. The scenery of the Sermon of the Mount, has been very graphically described by Tholuck, who has much of the genius of the poet, as well as of the learning and acumen of the interpreter.

“And now let us try to figure to ourselves the charms of this Galilean landscape, o’er-canopied by an oriental sky, in order to reproduce, while we are reading them, the same impression which was made by the words when they were heard. While, on every other occasion during his abode upon earth, the Son of God preferred the unostentatious and obscure, he seems to have selected the most beautiful and enchanting spot in nature, as the temple in which to open his ministry. Travellers are wont to liken the mountain scenery of Galilee to the finest in their native lands, the Swede Hasselquist to East Gothland, and Clarke, the Englishman, to the romantic dales of Kent and Surrey. The environs of the Galilean sea have been compared with the banks of the Lake of Geneva. This is said in the present day, when the weight of the Turkish sceptre, like the curse of heaven, oppresses that once blooming land. What then must it have been when the Saviour of the world made it the scene of his presence! Even Josephus, in speaking of Galilee, rises into a poetical mood. ‘Marvellous,’ he says,¹ ‘for natural beauty is the country around the Sea of Genesaret. Such is the fertility of the soil, that it produces, spontaneously, all shrubs. But, besides this, the husbandmen have planted the most various sorts, for there is none which the temperature of the climate does not suit. In other regions the nut tree requires cold, but there it grows in the richest luxuriance; there also flourishes the palm, though usually it delights in heat, and there, side by side, the fig and olive, which agree with a milder air. There seems to be an emulation in nature

¹ *De Bello Judæo*, iii. 106.

endeavouring to bring together the contending parties. The seasons also carry on a beautiful rivalry, each struggling with the other for the possession of the land.' But, charming above all must be the beauty of the region where it presents itself in one view, precisely at the spot on which our Saviour delivered his discourse. Korte informs us, that the mountain, standing as it does, apart, commands the same prospect which is seen from Tabor. Far off the rich and blooming landscape of Galilee; to the north, the snow-crowned Hermon; to the west, the woody Carmel. Maundrel even saw from Tabor the Mediterranean. At the distance of a stone-cast the cheerful sea of Galilee, encircled with mountain and forest. Add to this picture, the cloudless sky of southern regions, and the solemn silence of the early morn.¹ 'The whole scene,' says Hess, 'is of a character familiar and grave, attractive and dignified. The clear sky above him, and the rural district around, formed a natural temple. No synagogue, not even the temple of the metropolis itself, could make so deep and solemn an impression. There were to be seen here none of the formalities which would have accompanied the ordinary lecture of a Jewish teacher. He sat down upon the rising-ground, and fixing his eyes on the disciples, who stood next to him, began, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit.'"

I apprehend that the great design of our Lord in this discourse, was to show the Jews, by an induction of particulars, what he meant when he called on them to "repent," or change their minds. This, if I mistake not, is the true key of this discourse. There is throughout a direct reference to the false notions generally entertained by the Jews respecting the Messiah's kingdom; but as their prejudices originated in principles common to unregenerated human nature, though taking a peculiar form and colour from their cir-

¹ "The emotions of a warm adorer of Christ upon this spot, under a deep impression of the beauties of nature, and remembering the words that once were heard at the place, have been described by Rae-Wilson. 'Travels in the Holy Land,' 3d Ed., 1831, ii. p. 6."

cumstances, the statements made, are calculated to be "profitable to mankind in all countries, and in all ages, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."¹

I. THE DISTINGUISHING CHARACTERS AND PRIVILEGES OF THE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST.

Matth. v. 3-12.

Our Lord begins with describing who are the truly happy, who are the true citizens of the heavenly kingdom. It is a remark of importance, that our Lord is not in these words speaking so directly, if at all, of the manner in which men are to obtain happiness, as of the characters of those who are really happy. It is the faith of the truth with respect to the redeeming character of God, that gives true happiness; and it is this, too, we shall see as we proceed, that alone can, and that certainly will, form the characters here described, in the possession of which consists in a great measure true happiness.

The dispositions which are here represented as necessarily connected with the enjoyment of true happiness, are not amiable natural tempers. They are modes of thought and feeling produced by the Holy Spirit, through the instrumentality of the faith of the truth; and they are all of them, though no doubt with a great variety of degree, to be found in every man who, being born again, has entered into the kingdom of God.

§ 1. *Poor in spirit—possessors of the kingdom.*

The first class of persons pronounced "blessed," are "the poor in spirit." "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Some interpreters connect the phrase "in spirit," not with the word "poor," but with the word "blessed." 'Blessed in spirit'—spiritually happy are

¹ 2 Tim. iii. 16.

the poor; but this is not in accordance with the genius of the language; nor would the same principle of interpretation at all apply to the benediction in verse 8, "Blessed are the pure in heart."

It is quite plain that the descriptive appellation "poor in spirit," refers not to external situation, but to disposition and character. Extreme poverty is not favourable to religion any more than extreme affluence. The most depraved of mankind have been generally found among the opposite extremes of society; and it is equally true, that it is "a hard thing, for" a very poor, and a very "rich man, to enter into the kingdom of God."

The phrase, "poor in spirit" may, taken by itself, signify mean-spirited. This obviously is not its meaning here, for mean-spiritedness is no christian virtue, and is inconsistent with real happiness. The Christian is a man of a generous mind. He "provides things honest," honourable, "in the sight of all men." He accounts it more "blessed to give than to receive." He "thinks on the things which are honest, lovely, and of good report."¹

The phrase, "poor in spirit," taken by itself, might also signify 'spiritually poor,' as in Rev. iii. 17, that is, destitute of spiritual blessings—the favour of God—conformity to his image—the well-grounded hope of eternal life. I need scarcely say, that cannot be the meaning, for he who is thus poor in spirit, is wretched indeed.

To be "poor in spirit," is, I apprehend, just synonymous with to be humble. This is the meaning Chrysostom attaches to the phrase, and he is followed by the great body of the best interpreters, ancient and modern. To be "poor in spirit" is to think of a person's self "not more highly than he ought to think."² When a man is made to see the truth, with regard to the character and law of God, with regard to his own character and conduct, and especially with regard to the way of salvation, through the obedience

¹ Rom. xii. 17. Acts xx. 35. Phil. iv. 8.

² Rom. xii. 3.

unto death of the incarnate Only Begotten of God, he obtains such views of himself, both as a creature and a sinner, as are calculated to repress everything like the risings of pride. He knows himself to be an entirely dependent being; he knows himself to be an inexcusable sinner; he knows himself to be a righteously condemned criminal; he knows that "in him, that is, in his flesh, dwells no good thing;"¹ he knows that he has, that he can have, no hope, but in the sovereign mercy of God; that he has no righteousness to glory in, but the obedience unto death of the Son of God; and that whatever is right and holy in his sentiments and character, is owing entirely to the influence of the Spirit of God; and the knowledge and faith of all this, naturally produces deep habitual abasement of spirit. He feels himself "dust and ashes," guilty dust and ashes. A saved sinner, a sinner saved by grace, is the highest character he can lay claim to.

This is the poverty of spirit here spoken of, and he who possesses it is "blessed." He is blessed in the possession of such a temper, for it naturally makes him patient under affliction, grateful for every blessing; and, leading him to rest his hope entirely on something out of himself, secures a steadiness and permanence of peaceful piety and joyful expectation, which can in no other way be enjoyed. But this is not, I apprehend, our Lord's principal idea, for he assigns a particular reason why he pronounces the poor in spirit "blessed," and that is, that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

"The kingdom of heaven," as I have already shown you, is the order of things introduced by the Messiah; and when it is said that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit, the meaning is, they are the persons who enjoy the peculiar blessings of that order of things. The privileges and immunities of citizens of the heavenly kingdom, are their exclusive property.^a They are happy, for, though poor

¹ Rom. vii. 18.

^a See Note A.

in spirit, they are—probably in reference to the enjoyment of the heavenly happiness, which is called their “inheriting the kingdom”—said to be “rich in faith,” rich in expectancy, and “heirs of the kingdom.”¹ The Jews were generally of opinion that the *rich*, in the literal sense of that word, were to enjoy the principal honours and benefits of the Messiah’s kingdom. But, says our Lord, ye must “repent,” ye must change your mind. The true citizens of the heavenly kingdom, are not the rich in this world, but “the poor in spirit.”

§ 2. *They that mourn—They shall be comforted.*

The next class of persons pronounced blessed by our Lord are those that mourn.² “Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.”³ It is natural for man to count the gay and the prosperous happy; and the Jews expected nothing but festivity and gladness under the reign of the Messiah. It is as if he said, ‘Repent, change your mind; in your mode of thinking, happiness and mirth are indissolubly associated, but they only are happy who mourn.’

It is plain, that it is not every species of mourning that is here referred to. There is “a sorrow of the world which worketh death.”⁴ Affliction is not at all necessarily connected with holy character, or spiritual privilege. Those who mourn are, I apprehend, those who, in consequence of obtaining just views of the holiness and benignity of the Divine character, and of the guilt of their own conduct, and the depravity of their own natures, are habitually sorrowing for their own sins after a godly sort, and who also “sigh and cry for the abominations done in the land,”⁵ and “when they behold transgressors are grieved;”⁶ who sympathise deeply with the afflictions of others, and “weep with them who weep.”⁷ It is also probable that our Lord refers to

¹ James ii. 5.

² Matth. v. 4.

³ Qui non gemit peregrinus, non gaudebit civis. AUGUST. Epp. 248.

⁴ 2 Cor. vii. 10.

⁵ Ezek. ix. 4.

⁶ Psal. cxix. 158.

⁷ Rom. xii. 15.

the undoubted fact, that all his peculiar people are, in some form or other, visited with affliction—some of them with very severe and complicated affliction:—"For whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth, and he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth."¹

These mourners are blessed. In filial penitence, in sorrow for the dishonour done to God, in generous sympathy, there is much real present satisfaction, and even enjoyment—satisfaction and enjoyment infinitely superior to any which the impenitent and selfish can taste; and the afflicted mourning Christian is happy, inasmuch as his affliction is contributing to his improvement—is "working patience and experience, and hope"²—is producing "the peaceable fruits of righteousness"³—is "working out for him a far more exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory."⁴

But the reason particularly assigned for his pronouncing these mourners blessed, is, "they shall be comforted." Mourning over their sins, they shall be comforted, by the plain declarations of a free and a full forgiveness, which, by the influence of the good Spirit, they shall be enabled to believe, and, "believing, to rejoice with joy unspeakable:"⁵ mourning over the dishonour done to God, they shall be comforted by the assurances, that a period is hastening onward, when the excellences of the Divine character and government shall be universally acknowledged: mourning over the calamities of their fellow-men, they are comforted by knowing that God is bringing good out of the evil which they deplore, and that yet a little while, suffering shall be entirely unknown in the universe of God, except among the irreclaimable rebels against his holy government: mourning over their own afflictions, they are comforted by knowing that they have the sympathy of their Lord and Saviour, that they all result from paternal kindness, and shall all promote their improvement and happiness. And not

¹ Heb. xii. 6.² Rom. v. 3, 4.³ Heb. xii. 11.⁴ 2 Cor. iv. 17.⁵ 1 Pet. i. 8.

only shall they be thus comforted while they mourn, but ere long the days of their mourning shall be ended; they shall obtain complete and everlasting consolation:—"And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."¹

§ 3. *The meek—they shall inherit the earth.*

We proceed now to the consideration of the third beatitude—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."² "The meek," is an appellation which describes the temper of mind under suffering. The persons here spoken of are viewed, not as enjoying unbroken prosperity, but as exposed to affliction in a variety of forms; and, when thus exposed to affliction, they are not fretful, and discontented, and resentful, but meek, quiet, resigned, cheerful sufferers. Patience and meekness are nearly allied. The difference seems to be this—patience is expressive of the sufferer's temper in reference to his sufferings; meekness is expressive of his temper in reference to those who are the authors or occasions of his sufferings. Our afflictions may be viewed as coming from God, or as coming from our fellow-men; and meekness is the name of that disposition which we should cherish, and which every Christian, so far

¹ Rev. vii. 13-17.

² Matth. v. 5.

as he is under the influence of christian principle, does cherish, both in reference to God and man, viewed as the cause or the occasion of suffering to us.

Like all the other holy tempers described in this passage, meekness originates in right views of the Divine character, and our own. A conviction of the infinite greatness and excellence, the supreme sovereignty, the infinite wisdom, the immaculate holiness, and the infinite condescension and kindness of God, and of our own insignificance as creatures, and demerit as sinners, lies at the foundation of that meekness which forms an essential part of the character of a genuine Christian. The man who really believes, that God has a right to do with him, as his creature, whatever he pleases; that, in the exercise of that right, he is uniformly guided by righteousness and wisdom, and influenced by benignity; that anything short of the severest punishment which he is capable of enduring, is mercy to him, viewed as a sinner; that God is rich in mercy—"in Christ reconciling the world to himself"—his Father and Friend, who has given for him his only Son, and given to him eternal life, and has promised to "make all things work together for his good:"¹ the man who really believes all this with regard to God, though he may deeply feel the afflictions with which God may visit him, cannot be fretful and impatient—cannot question either the righteousness, or the wisdom, or the kindness, of the Divine procedure to him. The language of his heart is, "Here am I, let *Him* do to me as seemeth good unto him." "The will of the Lord be done." "Hath not the potter power over the clay?" "Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?" "It is of the Lord's mercies that I am not consumed." I will "consider in my heart, that as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord my God chasteneth me." "I will bear the indignation of the Lord,

¹ 2 Cor. v. 19. Rom. viii. 28, 32.

because I have sinned against him ;" nay, I will be thankful to him who treats me, not as a "bastard," but as a "son." I will "hear the rod and him who hath appointed it." Thus does the meek man "hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord," that is, for deliverance from affliction, from him who hath sent affliction. Thus does he "sit alone, and keep silence ; thus does he put his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope ;" for he believes that "the Lord will not cast off for ever : for though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men." ¹

Meekness is most severely tried when our fellow-men are the direct causes of our sufferings, and when these sufferings originate in their injustice and malignity. But, even in these cases, the well-instructed Christian in meekness possesses his soul. He knows, that though men may have had a guilty agency in his sufferings, God has had a righteous agency ; that "*this* also has come forth from the Lord, who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working ;" that the wicked are but "God's hand and rod ;" ² and that, while righteous judgment is God's province, humble, quiet suffering is his. Besides, he knows that the unjust and malignant conduct of his enemies, is but the native result of that corrupted nature, of which he is a possessor as well as they, under whose uncontrolled dominion he, like them, once was, and from whose thralldom, if delivered, he owes his deliverance entirely to free, sovereign mercy.

The influence which these views of christian truth have in forming the disposition of meekness, is most beautifully illustrated by the apostle, when he calls on Christians to be "gentle, showing all meekness unto all men ; for *we* ourselves

¹ 2 Sam. xv. 26. Acts xxi. 14. Rom. ix. 21. Lam. iii. 39 ; iii. 22. Deut. viii. 5. Mic. vii. 9. Heb. xii. 7, 8. Mic. vi. 9. Lam. iii. 26, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33.

² Isa. xxviii. 29. Psal. xvii. 14. Isa. x. 5.

also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour to man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour."¹

This *meekness*, both in its manifestations towards God and man, was most illustriously exemplified in the character and conduct of our Lord and Saviour. When exaction was made, and he, on whose head was made to meet "the iniquity of us all," became answerable, he was "wounded, and bruised, and chastised, and smitten to death" by his Father. Yet he was "brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers was dumb." He uttered no complaint, displayed no fretfulness—"Not my will, but thine be done."² And then, with regard to mankind:—"When he was reviled, he reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him who judgeth righteously;"³ and, so far from cherishing resentful feelings towards his enemies, he wept when he thought of the miseries they were drawing down on their own heads, and died with this prayer on his lips—"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."⁴ If we would rightly understand what christian meekness is, we must study his character, and "learn of him who was meek and lowly in heart."⁵

Now, our Lord pronounces those who are thus meek, blessed:—"Blessed are the meek." It is as if he had said, "Ye call the proud happy:"⁶ you think there is the greatest probability of the prosperous man having a good share in the blessings of that temporal kingdom which you are expecting the Messiah to establish; but you must "repent,"

¹ Tit. iii. 3-6.² Isa. liii. 7. Luke xxii. 42.³ 1 Pet. ii. 23.⁴ Luke xix. 42; xxiii. 34.⁵ Matth. xi. 29.⁶ Mal. iii. 15.

you must change your mind. According to the maxims of the spiritual kingdom, of which He is to be the founder, it is not the proud, prosperous man, but it is the meek sufferer, that is the happy man ; it is *he* who shall be accounted great in the kingdom of God.

The meek may be pronounced happy, for the disposition which characterises them is one of the essential elements of happiness. Humble, cheerful resignation to the will of God, is happiness ; proud, self-sufficient dissatisfaction, is misery.

But our Lord here, as in the other beatitudes, assigns a particular reason why he pronounces the meek blessed :—“Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.”

In these words of our Lord, there is a plain reference to the words of the Psalmist :—“The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” “Such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth.” “The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.”¹

The words before us have been variously interpreted. By many interpreters they have been considered, as equivalent to the statement, that “godliness has the promise of the life that now is ;”² as an assertion that the meek are those who really have the greatest enjoyment of the good things of the present state. They are the persons most likely to enjoy such things as are needful and convenient, with the greatest security, and to have the most undisturbed enjoyment of them. As the Apostle Peter says, “Who will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good,”³ gentle, kind, beneficent ? The meek man makes few enemies to himself, and does not bring himself into hostile collision with those among whom he lives. He may not be so likely as others to get a great deal of the world, but he is likely to have a great deal more enjoyment in his little, than a man of an opposite temper in his abundance :—“The little which the

¹ Deut. xix. 14. Psal. xxv. 13 ; xxxvii. 11, 18, 29.

² 1 Tim. iv. 8.

³ 1 Pet. iii. 13.

righteous man hath, being more and better than the riches of many wicked.”¹

Others lay the emphasis on the word “inherit,” and consider our Lord as saying, ‘The meek have a covenant right to the good things of this world, which men of an opposite character are destitute of.’ Both these interpretations state truths, and important ones; but still, I apprehend, they do not bring out the meaning of our Lord.²

We are to recollect that our Lord was speaking to Jews, and that he uses phraseology familiar to them, and accommodates himself to their mode of thinking. His words, literally rendered, are, “they shall inherit the land,” *i.e.*, Canaan,—“the land of promise.” He speaks of the blessings of the new economy, in the language of Old Testament prophecy. Israel, according to the flesh,—the external people of God, under the former economy, were a figure of Israel according to the spirit—the spiritual people of God under the new economy; and Canaan, the worldly inheritance of the former, is the type of that aggregate of heavenly and spiritual blessings which form the inheritance of the latter. In reference to the state of things under the Messiah, it is said, “Thy people also shall be all righteous;” none but the truly righteous are members of the true spiritual church; subjects of Messiah the prince: “they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified.”³ To “inherit the land,” is to enjoy the peculiar blessings of the people of God under the new economy; it is to be “heirs of the world,” “heirs of God, joint-heirs with Christ Jesus.” It is to be “blessed with all heavenly and spiritual blessings in Christ;” to enjoy that

¹ Psal. xxxvii. 16.

² Calvin combines these views and something more in his exegesis: “Etiam si nusquam pedem in suo figere queant, terræ domicilio quiete fruuntur. Neque imaginaria est hæc possessio, quia terram inhabitant, quam sibi divinitus concessam esse norunt. Deinde adversus malorum intemperiem et furias opposita Dei manu teguntur . . . atque hoc illis satis est, donec mundi hereditatem ultimo die adeant.”

³ Isa. lx. 21.

true peace and rest,—of which the rest of Israel in Canaan
 was a figure,—which a man enters into on believing the
 truth, and which will be perfected in heaven.

Such, I apprehend, is the true meaning of the phrase, "they shall inherit the land;" so that our Lord in this beatitude, materially says: 'You call the proud and the prosperous happy, and you suppose they are likely to inherit Canaan under the Messiah. I tell you, the truly happy are the meek sufferers; they, and they alone, shall be possessors of that spiritual inheritance, of which Canaan was merely a figure.'

§ 4. *They hunger and thirst after righteousness—they shall be filled.*

vents the tautology which otherwise would be found in the paragraph, as the words before us would in this case be precisely the same in meaning as verse tenth.

Hunger and thirst are, I believe, in all languages, used to express vehement desire.¹ It is not very easy to fix the precise meaning of the word "righteousness." In the Apostle Paul's writings, it ordinarily signifies 'justification,' or 'method of justification.' I apprehend that here, as in the former case, we are to find its true meaning by attending to the manner in which the phrase is used in the Old Testament, especially in the prophecies with regard to the Messiah. I shall quote a few of these :—"Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people, and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness."² "Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness. I bring near my righteousness; it shall not be far off, and my salvation shall not tarry: and I will place salvation in Zion for Israel my glory."³ "My righteousness is near; my salvation is gone forth; and mine arms shall judge the people; the isles shall wait upon me, and on mine arm shall they trust. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."⁴ "Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed."⁵ From these passages, it seems evident that the phrases, "righteousness," "God's righteousness," when used in reference to the new economy, describe the same thing as salvation, God's salvation. To hunger and thirst after righteousness is earnestly to desire that spiritual deliverance which the Messiah has come to accomplish, and which consists

¹ Psal. xlii. 3; lxiii. 1.

² Dan. ix. 24.

³ Isa. xli. 12, 13.

⁴ Isa. li. 5, 6.

⁵ Isa. lvi. 1.

in "righteousness;" in the exercise of "grace reigning through righteousness unto everlasting life;" in pardon dispensed in consistency with, and in glorious illustration of, righteousness; and in bringing the whole inner man, in all his sentiments and feelings, into conformity with the righteous mind and will of God. The persons here described are those who, in contrast with the great body of the Jews who were earnestly expecting a temporal deliverer and a temporal deliverance, were eagerly desiring a Saviour from guilt and depravity, and their fearful consequences.

Such our Lord pronounces happy; for, while they who were looking for a temporal Messiah and worldly blessings would be disappointed, they who were desirous of heavenly and spiritual blessings would be abundantly satisfied; they would be "filled." They would obtain "abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness;" they would obtain "in Christ the redemption" that was "through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of Divine grace." "Justified freely by God's grace, his blood would cleanse them from all sin, and they would be washed, and sanctified, and justified in his name, and by his Spirit."¹ In the knowledge and faith of the truth respecting the Saviour, they would obtain the gratification of their desires; and, in the fulness of their grateful and happy hearts, they would exclaim—"Surely in the Lord have we righteousness;" we are "complete in him;" "of God are we in Christ Jesus (who of God is made unto us wisdom) righteousness, sanctification, and redemption"²—justified, sanctified, and redeemed.

§ 5. *The merciful—they shall obtain mercy.*

I proceed now to the illustration of the fifth beatitude—"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."³ According to the views generally entertained by the Jews,

¹ Eph. i. 7. 1 John i. 7. 1 Cor. vi. 11.

² Isa. xlv. 24. Col. ii. 10. 1 Cor. i. 30. Comp. 2 Cor. v. 21.

³ Matth. v. 7.

the persons most likely to obtain a large portion of the blessedness to be enjoyed under the Messiah's reign, were men of fierce warlike dispositions, fired with resentment for the wrongs done their country ; who should, under the victorious banners of their Prince, inflict a severe and merited vengeance on their Gentile oppressors ; and as the well-earned reward of their valorous exploits, be enriched by the spoils of their spoilers, and raised to dominion over those who had enslaved them. How different is the truth ! These are not the blessed ones under Messiah's reign ; this is not the happiness he confers. "Blessed are the merciful ;" and their happiness consists in this—not that they are enriched with spoil, or invested with dominion, but that "they shall obtain mercy."

Let us shortly consider, in succession, the character which is here represented as belonging to the subjects of the Messiah, and then the happiness to be enjoyed by them. They are "merciful," and being merciful, they are "blessed, for they shall obtain mercy."¹

Mercy may be viewed in reference either to guilt or misery. Mercy, viewed in reference to guilt, is opposed to resentment or revenge, and is a disposition to forgive, and deal leniently with an offender. Mercy, viewed in reference to misery, is opposed to insensibility or cruelty, and is a disposition to relieve or to prevent suffering ; a compassionate tenderness of heart, which makes us weep with those who weep, or who have cause to weep, though ignorant or insensible of their wretchedness. The disposition to forgive seems as naturally included under meekness, as under mercy, and in the following remarks I shall confine myself to the

¹ Much of the train of thought, and not a few of the expressions, in the following illustration, are borrowed from Dr Wardlaw's excellent discourse "On Christian Mercy," though so much altered and mixed up with other matter, as not easily to admit of more distinct acknowledgment. A strong resemblance will be found, also, to the exposition of "Be Pitiful," in the Expository Discourses on the First Epistle of Peter. This exposition was first written ; and, when used as materials for an illustration of Peter, the author had no idea of publishing either.

delineation of that distinguishing feature of christian character, which consists in a disposition to pity and relieve the miseries of mankind.

The mercy which our Lord represents as one of the characteristics of that people whom he pronounces blessed, is something very different from a naturally affectionate and kindly temper. This is a mere instinctive feeling, and, though amiable, no proper object of moral approbation. In its movements there is no reference to the Divine authority; and it is frequently found in conjunction with principles and habits, most decidedly condemned by the Divine law.

The mercy spoken of by our Lord, like all the other dispositions here specified, as characteristic of the subjects of the Messiah, is the result of the truth as it is in Jesus, understood and believed; and can be produced in no other way. It is the feeling which a man has, who knows and believes that, in the exercise of sovereign kindness on the part of God, through the mediation of his Son Jesus Christ, he is delivered from evils infinite in their number, and inconceivable in their severity, to which he had rendered himself justly liable by his violation of a law most holy, just, and good—it is the feeling which such a conscious debtor to Divine mercy naturally cherishes towards those who are involved in sufferings, of whatever kind, especially in that worst species of suffering, from which, through the grace of God, he has himself obtained deliverance.

This mercy is wide in its range. It regards both the bodies and the souls of men: both their temporal and eternal interests. This is one of the features which chiefly distinguish it from that instinctive kindliness to which I have just been adverting. The good-natured generous man of the world, pities and relieves the temporal wants of his fellow-creatures; but he thinks not of their spiritual state, their everlasting prospects. He feels tender compassion for naked, starving, diseased bodies. He feels compassion, it may be, for minds uninstructed in that information which is

requisite to enable men to obtain a creditable subsistence for themselves in this world, but he feels no pity for souls perishing in ignorance of God, and under the condemning sentence of his holy law. This cannot indeed be expected; for how should he feel for others, when, in reference to such subjects, he has no feeling for himself;—though there is something monstrously absurd in men's being so exceedingly concerned about the removal of the sufferings of a few years, and altogether careless about the prevention of the intolerable miseries of eternity. Christian mercy is not thus inconsistent. It looks on mankind, chiefly in their relation to God and eternity; it regards them both as mortal and immortal; and it is chiefly affected by their spiritual state, and their everlasting prospects.

In this respect it resembles that divine mercy, in the faith of which it originates. The Divine Being pities all the miseries of man; but it is immortal man—the sinner—that is emphatically the object of Divine mercy. The mercy wherewith He remembers man in his lost estate, is great mercy, “for it endureth for ever.” It stretches onward to eternity, and it delivers its objects from the lowest hell; and such, according to his capacity, is the mercy of every one who has found mercy.

But while chiefly affected with the miseries of man as a sinner—with the ignorance, and error, and guilt, and obduracy, and depravity, which mark his character, and with the painful, extreme, and irremediable wretchedness which, if he repent not, awaits him in the world to come—the christianly merciful man is not affected by these alone. He is far from being insensible to their temporal calamities and wants. He cherishes a sincere sympathy for all the calamities and evils to which men are exposed in their bodies, in their minds, in their connections with each other; from whatever causes these evils may have arisen, whether from the immediate visitation of God, from the injustice and cruelty of their fellow-men, or from the folly and

crimes of the sufferers themselves. Like Job, "he weeps for them who are in trouble," and his "soul is grieved for the poor." ¹

But this mercy is something more than a feeling ; it is an operative principle. It is not "a well shut up, a fountain sealed," but a copious source of acts of beneficence—streams of blessings. This mercy does not evaporate in unprofitable words. It is not satisfied with saying to those who are naked and destitute of bodily food, "be ye fed, be ye clothed;" but to the limits of its ability it gives "the things necessary for the body." It is not contented with deploring the ignorance, and vice, and spiritual wretchedness, of mankind ; but exerts itself for the instruction of the ignorant, the reclaiming of the profligate, the conversion of sinners, the salvation of the perishing.

And here, too, this mercy resembles that in the faith of which, as we have already remarked, it originates. The mercy of God to a fallen world, was operative mercy. "God so loved the world," that he "spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." ² And in the character of him who is the image of the invisible God, active mercy is the prominent feature. He not only pitied, but saved. Though "in the form of God, he thought it not robbery to be equal with God ; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men : And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." ³ With what indefatigable activity, what disinterested self-denial, what patient endurance of suffering, did he seek to promote the true happiness of mankind. It was "his meat to do the" benignant "will of his Father, and to finish his work" in "preaching glad tidings to the meek," comforting all who mourned, healing diseases, and "giving himself a ransom for all." ⁴ He did not wait, on many occasions, for applica-

¹ Job xxx. 25.

² John iii. 16. Rom. viii. 32.

³ Phil. ii. 6.

⁴ John iv. 34. Isa. lxi. 1. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Heb. x. 7-10.

tion on behalf of the miserable; he imparted unasked relief; he went in quest of objects on whom to show mercy; and thus will christian mercy, which is just the mind of Christ dwelling in us, lead all who are under its influence, to abound in acts of substantial kindness to the poor and the miserable.

It is this influential, operative mercy on which the blessing of God is pronounced. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily; and thy righteousness shall go before thee: the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am. If thou take away from the midst of thee the yoke, the putting forth of the finger, and speaking vanity; and if thou draw out thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul; then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon-day: And the Lord shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not."¹ Such was the mercy which characterised the ancient patriarch. "When the ear heard me, then it blessed me; and when the eye saw me, it gave witness to me; because I delivered the poor that cried, and the fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me: and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on righteousness, and it clothed me: my judgment was a robe and a diadem. I was eyes to the blind, and feet was I to the lame. I was

¹ Isa. lviii. 6-11.

a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out. And I brake the jaws of the wicked, and plucked the spoil out of his teeth.”¹

The external act of beneficence may exist where the inward principle of christian mercy is wanting, and may be useful to man though it cannot be acceptable to God. But wherever the principle of christian mercy exists, it will manifest itself by corresponding fruits, wherever there exists ability to do good; mere professions of sympathy, however fervent, must be hypocritical, and however they may impose on men, which they seldom do in any great degree, they must be regarded with abhorrence by him who desireth truth in the inward parts.

It scarcely requires to be remarked, that the form and degrees of the manifestations of the principle of mercy, must depend on the circumstances in which we are placed; and that “a cup of cold water” may be as genuine and as acceptable a display of mercy, as the most costly pecuniary offering.

This merciful disposition is not confined in its exercise to any particular class of men. The Christian, no doubt, feels a peculiar interest in the afflictions of those who are connected with him, whether by the ties of nature or of grace—those who are of his own household, and those who are of the household of faith; but wherever he sees misery, there does he feel compassion, and there, too, if it be in his power, does he give relief. It is not the merit of the sufferer, but his misery, that he looks at; and here again christian mercy resembles that mercy, in the faith of which it originates.

The Christian, under the influence of this principle, “loves his enemies, blesses them that curse him, does good to them that hate him, and prays for them that despitefully use him and persecute him;” and thus shows himself to be a “child of his Father in heaven, who maketh his sun to rise on

¹ Job. xxix. 11-17.

the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.”¹ Thus have I endeavoured shortly to delineate that christian mercy, which is an essential ingredient in the character of all the true subjects of the Messiah.

Let us now turn our attention for a little to the happiness which our Lord represents as possessed by them. They are “blessed;” and they are “blessed, for they shall obtain mercy.” The happiness of the followers of the Messiah, as described by our Lord, is as different from what the Jews were generally anticipating as their characters themselves. Fierce relentless warriors were the persons they conceived as likely to be greatest in his kingdom. But our Lord tells them that not they, but “the merciful,” are to be his favourites; and as to the happiness enjoyed under him, it is not to be that of brave warriors receiving the merited reward of their sanguinary labours: it is to be that of merciful men receiving mercy.

The merciful man is blessed in the possession of this disposition. There is an inward satisfaction in the exercise of benevolence and pity, to which the highest gratification of the selfish man is not worthy to be compared. It must, indeed, be of a very high character, for it is a source of happiness to God and his Son. It is a *delight* to Jehovah to show mercy;² and we have no reason to doubt that our Lord Jesus referred to his own experience in that memorable saying recorded by the Apostle Paul, “It is more blessed to give than to receive.”³

But our Lord fixes our attention on one circumstance, as peculiarly illustrative of the happiness of the merciful man: he “obtains mercy.” Here let us inquire what it is to obtain mercy; and what is the connection between being merciful and obtaining mercy. There is, however, a previous question: Of whom do the merciful obtain mercy? It is obvious to remark, that the display of a merciful disposition is calculated to excite kind

¹ Matth v. 44-47.

² Micah vii. 18.

³ Acts xx. 35.

feelings on the part of all who witness such displays ; and the man who pities others is likely himself not to be unpitied when he is brought into circumstances calculated to awaken compassion. But there can be no reasonable doubt that the mercy here referred to is the mercy of God. The pity which man can show man, was not very likely to be represented by our Lord as that which entitled its possessor, or him who might certainly count on it, to be called blessed. It must be the pity of God which can lay a foundation for pronouncing him who is its object blessed.¹

What is it, then, to obtain mercy from God ? It is obviously not to obtain merited reward. An innocent and happy creature is never said to obtain mercy. The exercise of mercy supposes guilt and misery in its object. When God shows mercy, he pardons the guilty, and he blesses the miserable. To obtain mercy is for a sinner who deserves everlasting destruction to obtain pardon and salvation as tokens of the benignant pity of God.

The second question will require a somewhat more extended answer. What connection is there between being merciful and obtaining mercy ? It must be very plain to every person who will allow himself to think at all, that our merciful disposition is not the ground on which we obtain mercy. The truth on this subject is very clearly stated in Scripture. Divine mercy is free sovereign mercy ; it is not purchased at all ; not purchased even by Christ's work, far less by our own. Christ's mediation is not the price of mercy, it is the channel through which mercy finds its way to the sinner in consistency with justice. And faith is not the price of mercy either ; it is the appointed way in which the sinner enters on the enjoyment of mercy. Whatever the words before us mean, they cannot signify what many would have them mean, "that the gift of God may be purchased

¹ "Not even as an adjunct, can the idea of mercy shown us by our fellow-men be connected with *ἰσχυρίζεσθαι*, as Calvin, Piscator, and others, suppose. *Παρεῖσι τοῦ Θεοῦ δαλόντες*, says Euthymius."—TROLUCK.

with money," or obtained as a recompense for what they call deeds of charity. To speak of obtaining mercy in this way is contradiction and absurdity. Mercy, when shown by God to his creatures—especially to his sinful creatures—must, from its very nature, be free. It is bestowing pardon on a righteously-condemned criminal; conferring happiness on one whose desert is misery; giving life where death is due.

But is it not said, "Charity covereth a multitude of sins?"¹ Without doubt it is. But in that passage there is no reference to almsgiving, nor to what is ordinarily termed the pardon of sin. Attend to the words of Solomon, which Peter quotes—"Hatred stirreth up strifes, but love covereth all sins"²—and you will at once perceive how strangely they pervert the Scriptures, who draw from that passage any support to the notion that our sins may be pardoned on the ground of our good works, or that mercy may be bought by pecuniary sacrifices.

But while they who obtain mercy obtain it entirely from the sovereign kindness of God, through the mediation of his Son, yet all who, through the faith of the truth, trust in the Divine mercy, are distinguished by a particular character, the result of this faith produced in the soul by divine influence; so that no one, whatever may be his professions, who does not possess this character, will be found at last to have had any personal interest in the saving virtue of the Redeemer's sacrifice, nor, of course, in the saving mercy of God.

In the whole of the paragraph which we are at present engaged in explaining, as I have more than once already had occasion to remark to you, our Lord's design is not to explain the foundation on which the hope of mercy is to rest, but to delineate the character of his genuine disciples. Of this character, mercy is one of the prominent features; and what our Lord says is just this: 'Mercy is a necessary

¹ 2 Pet. iv. 8.

² Prov. x. 12.

part of that holy character which, according to his most benignant purpose of grace, he has inseparably connected with the enjoyment of that happiness which is the result of his free sovereign kindness.'

Of the justness of the views we have now given, we have a very striking illustration in reference to one of the modes of the exercise of mercy enjoined on the disciples of Jesus Christ. In the form of prayer which Christ taught his disciples, we are instructed to say, "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" and our Lord enforces the use of this petition by adding, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."¹ Is our forgiving one another, then, the meritorious cause of our being forgiven by God? One might have supposed so, had it not been that such an idea is entirely subversive of the gospel method of salvation, and that in other places of Scripture our being forgiven by God is held out as the grand motive why we should forgive.² That which is the effect, cannot, at the same time, be the cause of that which produces that effect. But our not forgiving one another is a plain proof that we are not under the influence of the faith of the forgiving love of God; and if we continue in that state, we shall not be among those who shall "find mercy of the Lord at that day."

§ 6. *The pure in heart—they shall see God.*

We proceed now to the consideration of the sixth beatitude, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."³ The first thing to be done here is to ascertain the true import of the appellation "pure in heart." The term is plainly figurative, and, like most figurative terms, admits of being variously interpreted. In opposition to a dishonest deceitful man, a man of unsound heart,⁴ a man of integrity may be

¹ Matth. xviii. 32, 33. Eph. iv. 32. Col. iii. 13. ² Matth. vi. 13, 14. ³ Matth. v. 8.

⁴ Mundum cor = simplex (i. e., sine plica) cor = ἰσθαλμὶς ἀσλοῦς, — TRENCH.

said to be sound or pure in heart ; or, in opposition to a sensual lustful man, a man of a polluted heart, a man whose thoughts and desires are regulated by the law of chastity may be said to be pure in heart ; or, viewing all error and all sin as polluting the mind and heart, purity of heart may be considered as synonymous with holiness, conformity of mind and will to God ; or, in contradistinction to the man of clean hands, the person whose external behaviour is unimpeachable, the man of a pure heart may be viewed as the person whose inward principles, whose sentiments and affections, whose modes of thought and feeling, as well as his external conduct, are in accordance with the holy law of God.

I cannot help thinking that our Lord, in using the terms before us, had a tacit reference to that character of external sanctity or purity which belonged to the Jewish people, and to that privilege of intercourse with God, which was connected with that character.¹ They were a people separated from the nations polluted with idolatry ; set apart as holy to Jehovah ; and, as a holy people, they were permitted to draw near to their God, the only living and true God, in the ordinances of his worship. On the possession of this character, and on the enjoyment of this privilege, the Jewish people plumed themselves. They accounted themselves blessed, because they were thus " holy to the Lord," and were thus permitted to draw near to him.

A higher character, however, and a higher privilege, belonged to those who should be the subjects of the Messiah's reign. They should not only be externally holy, but " pure in heart ;" and they should not merely be allowed to approach towards the holy place, where God's honour dwelt, but they should " see God," be introduced into the most intimate intercourse with him. Thus viewed, as a description of the spiritual character and privileges of the subjects of the Messiah, in contrast with the external character and

¹ " Non sufficit puritas ceremonialis."—BENGEL.

privileges of the Jewish people, the passage before us is full of most important and interesting truth.

The subjects of the Messiah are "pure in heart"—spiritually purified. Their bodies may not be purified by the lustrations of the Mosaic law, but "their hearts are purified by faith."¹ To use the apostle's language, their hearts are "sprinkled from an evil conscience."² The man whose conscience is polluted with guilt, cannot be happy, and is altogether unfit for communion with God. Every man's conscience is naturally polluted with guilt, for every man is a sinner, and, to a certain extent, every man knows that he is a sinner. While he regards God as his enemy, and while he considers himself as under guilt, he must regard God as his enemy, he must be a stranger to true holiness and to true happiness, for true holiness and happiness arise out of the knowledge of God, and favourable intercourse with God as our Father and our Friend. The only way in which the heart can be purified from the evil conscience, which prevents holiness and happiness, by shutting us out from God, who is the source of both, is by the sprinkling of the atoning blood of the Lamb of God, who bears, and bears away, the sin of the world. It is the belief of the truth respecting Jehovah, as well pleased in his Son, "reconciling the world to himself" in him, "seeing he has made him, who knew no sin, to be sin in our room;" it is the belief of this truth, which cleanses the conscience, which purifies the heart, which gives us confidence in the sight of God, and enables us to go boldly to his throne, as the throne of mercy. This "love of God shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost given to us,"³ produces love to God; for "we love him who hath so loved us;" and this love to God is the prolific seed of all holiness, both of heart and conduct.

The pure in heart, or the spiritually purified, are thus those who, through the faith of the truth respecting the atoning

¹ Acts xv. 9.

² Heb. x. 22.

³ Rom. v. 5.

sacrifice of Jesus, are fitted for spiritual intercourse with the holy Jehovah. These are the blessed ones; not those who have been "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, by the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer," but they who have had "their conscience purged from dead works, to serve the living God, by the sprinkling of the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God" a "sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour."¹

Such persons are blessed in the enjoyment of this spiritual purification, "for they shall see God." They who were "sanctified to the purifying of the flesh," were permitted to enter the sacred gates of the temple, and, in the appointed rites of worship, to approach to Jehovah. This was an important and valuable privilege. But far higher is the privilege enjoyed by those whose "hearts are sprinkled from an evil conscience"—whose "consciences are purged from dead works." "They shall see God," that is, they shall obtain clear and satisfactory views of his character, and they shall be admitted into intimate and delightful fellowship with him.

In the truth, the faith of which purifies the heart, they see God; for what is that truth but a manifestation of the glory of God in the face of his Son—an illustrious display of the combined radiance of divine holiness and divine benignity. The veil which covers the Holy of Holies is, as it were, rent asunder, and the believer sees, with the eye of his mind, Jehovah as "the Lord God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, not clearing the guilty" without satisfaction to the injured honours of his character, and the insulted rights of his government; "yet setting forth his Son a propitiation through faith in his blood," and proclaiming him-

¹ Heb. ix 13, 14. Eph. v. 2.

self to be “the just God and the Saviour;” “just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”¹ And he not only obtains clear satisfactory views of the Divine character, but he enjoys intimate and delightful communion with God. He is brought very near God; God’s mind becomes his mind; God’s will becomes his will; and his “fellowship is truly with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.”²

They who are pure in heart “see God” in this way, even in the present world; and in the future state their knowledge of God will become far more extensive—their fellowship with him far more intimate; for though, when compared with the privileges of a former dispensation, even now “as with open face we contemplate the glory of the Lord,” yet, in reference to the privileges of a higher economy, we yet see but “through a glass darkly”—we “know but in part”—we understand but in part—we enjoy but in part. But “that which is in part shall be done away,” and “that which is perfect shall come.” “We shall,” to use the apostle’s language, which we know is accurate, for it was taught him by the Holy Spirit, though the full meaning of it we shall never understand till we get to heaven,—we “shall see face to face,” we “shall know even as we are known;”³ or to borrow the words of the psalmist, we “shall behold his face in righteousness: we shall be satisfied, when we awake, with his likeness.”⁴ Then, and not till then, will the full meaning of these words be understood,—“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.”

§ 7. *The peace-makers—they shall be called the children of God.*

We proceed now to consider the seventh beatitude, “Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God.”⁵ The Jews, in general, regarded the gentile nations with bitter contempt and hatred, and they

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 6. Rom. iii. 25, 26.

² 1 Cor. xiii. 9-12.

⁴ Psal. xvii. 15.

³ John i. 3.

⁵ Matth. v. 9.

expected that, under the Messiah, there should be an uninterrupted series of warlike attacks made on these nations, till they were completely destroyed or subjugated to the chosen people of God. In their estimation, those emphatically deserved the appellation of happy who should be employed under Messiah the prince, to avenge on the heathen nations, all the wrongs these had done to Israel. How different is the spirit of the new economy. How beautifully does it accord with the angelic anthem which celebrated the nativity of its Founder: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men."

This is one of the distinguishing characters of the subjects of the Messiah, that they are peace-makers.¹ Through the knowledge and belief of the truth as it is in Jesus, they are brought into a state of peace. "They have been reconciled by God to himself, by the death of his Son." By him "they have received the reconciliation:"² the war which raged within is also brought to a close; and being at peace with God, and at peace with themselves, they are at peace with the whole world, regarding all mankind with a sincere benevolence, and desirous of promoting their best interests, both in this world and in that which is to come.

This naturally induces them to become peace-makers. It makes them desirous that all men should become partakers of the peace, which has been obtained through the ransom paid on the cross; and that, for this purpose, all "men should" acquaint themselves with God, as revealed in "Christ crucified," and thus be at peace. They know that "there is no peace for the wicked," and therefore, as peace-makers, they use the means which lie in their power, that "the wicked should forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and turn to the Lord, who will have mercy on him, and to our God, who will abundantly pardon."³ They know, and believe, that this "peace with

¹ *εἰρηνοποιῶν*, not merely *εἰρηνιστὴς* or *εἰρηνότατος*

² 2 Cor. v. 18. Rom. v. 10, 11.

³ *Isa.* lv. 7.

God, through our Lord Jesus Christ," lies at the foundation of peace with ourselves; and that these two lay the only solid foundation for peace, in all the extent of that word, with one another. They believe, that if men were but generally "reconciled to God through the death of his Son," then man, the brother, would live the friend of man; and till this is gained, in their estimation, little progress can be made towards this most desirable consummation; and that which receives the name of peace, is only a suspension of combat, or an armed truce. Under the influence of the faith of the truth, by means of which they have obtained peace, Christians, happy in themselves, endeavour to diffuse happiness around them. They carefully abstain from injuring any one; knowing that mutual injury is the great cause of mutual quarrels. Not easily provoked, they endeavour not to provoke others, except "to love and to good works,"¹ kind offices. They "follow peace with all men," so far as this is consistent with that "holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." "As much as lieth in" them, they endeavour to "live peaceably with all men."² In all the relations in which they are placed, whether domestic, civil, or ecclesiastical, their object is to prevent, allay, and extinguish anger, debate, strife, and division. In order to obtain peace, they will not sacrifice truth or duty, because they know that to be only a false peace,—not deserving the name, which can be secured in this way; but they will sacrifice everything but truth and duty, in order to obtain peace. They carefully avoid whatever they have reason to think will give offence, or create disunion; and readily bear even with men's weaknesses and follies when they are not criminal, rather than disturb peace. They count it their duty, not only to avoid carefully whatever may break the peace, but just because they love peace, though cautious of interfering in "strife that does not belong to them,"

¹ Heb. x. 24.² Heb. xii. 14. Rom. xii. 18.

they do not shrink from exertion and sacrifice, when they perceive that these on their part may conduce to the extinguishing of the fire of discord, though it may not have been kindled by themselves.

This peaceable and peace-making disposition, is by no means to be confounded with that indolent good nature which is but a modification of timidity and selfishness. He who, in order to secure what he terms peace, sacrifices truth and duty, will frequently fail in the object he has in view ; and even should he succeed, he will find at the great day of accounts, that not the blessing of the peace-maker, but the curse of "the fearful and unbelieving," shall rest on him ; and instead of being permitted to "enter through the gates into the city," he shall be shut out among "dogs, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all that love and make a lie."

The peace-makers are pronounced happy by our Lord : "Blessed are the peace-makers." They cannot but be happy. Next to the enjoyment of peace in our own minds, must be the delight of knowing that we are the means of diffusing peace and love around us. But the particular reason which our Lord assigns for pronouncing them happy is, "they shall be called the children of God." Such persons are the children of God, and they shall be called or acknowledged to be his children. Both these ideas are suggested by the words.

To be a child of God, is a figurative expression, descriptive of intimate and peculiar relation to God, and of moral conformity and resemblance to God. These peace-makers are the objects of the peculiar and favourable regards of God ; and indeed their possession of this disposition is a clear proof of it, for, in consequence of "the great love wherewith he loved them," he has by his Holy Spirit, delivered them from the dominion of those "lusts striving in their members," "from whence come wars and fightings ;" and from being "hateful and hating one another," has enabled them "to put on bowels of mercies," "to forbear one

another in love," and to "forgive one another, if any have a quarrel against any." ¹ The clearest evidence of individuals being the children of God, the objects of his peculiar love, is their possession of those holy dispositions which he alone can confer, and which he confers only on those whom it is his purpose to bless with final salvation.

The peace-makers are the children of God, not only as being the objects of his peculiar favour, but as being conformed to his image. He is "the God of peace." ² His great object in the wonderful scheme of redemption, is to "gather together in one all things in Christ," whether they be "things in heaven, or things on earth." ³ And all those who, under the influence of christian truth, are peace-makers, show that they are animated with the same principle of action as God, and "as obedient children," are co-operating with him in his benevolent design of establishing "peace on earth." As of all who delight in strife, and debate, and war, it may be said, "They are of their father the devil," who was "a murderer from the beginning; and the works of their father they do," so it may be said of all who, as the psalmist expresses it, "seek peace and pursue it," ⁴ they are of their "Father in heaven," "the God of peace," and the works of their Father they do. What greater happiness can a created being enjoy than to be the object of the Divine favour? what greater honour than to wear the impress of the Divine image?

The peace-makers shall not merely *be*, but they shall be "*called*," acknowledged to be, "the children of God." God calls them his children, even in the present state, distinguishing them by tokens of his peculiar regard; and at last he will publicly avow his relation to them in the presence of an assembled universe. Their fellow-saints recognise them by this distinguishing mark to be their brethren, children of

¹ James iv. 1. Col. iii. 12, 13.

² Rom. xv. 33; xvi. 20. 2 Cor. xiii. 11. 1 Thess. v. 23. Heb. xiii. 20.

³ Eph. i. 10.

⁴ John viii. 44. Psal. xxxiv. 14.

their common Father. Many, even of that world which is blind to some other of the characteristics of the children of God, who know not the younger brethren, as they knew not the first-born when he was among them, are constrained by the manifestation of this temper to say,—these are the sons of God; and there is a period approaching, when the peacemakers, however humble their situation may have been in the present state, and however much their characters may have been misapprehended or misrepresented, shall “shine forth like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” Then will be “the manifestation of the sons of God.”¹

This concludes the statement of the distinctive characters of the subjects of the kingdom of God.

§ 8. *Appendix.—Persecuted yet blessed.*

The beatitude in the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth verses, may be considered as a kind of appendix. “Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”²

The Jews expected that all of them were to enjoy the blessings of the Messiah’s reign; and that these blessings were to consist in a great measure in freedom from external evils, such as poverty and oppression, and in the enjoyment of external good, such as peace, wealth, honour, and in one word, prosperity. Our Lord had already distinctly intimated, that the subjects of the Messiah were not to consist of the Jewish nation as a body, but of men possessed of a

¹ Matth. xiii. 43. Rom. viii. 19. 1 John iii. 2, 3.

² Matth. v. 10-12. “Of these verses it is curious to find, what certainly was not accidental, a reminiscence, 1 Pet. iii. 14, ἅλλ’ ὅτι πάσχετε διὰ δικαιοσύνην μακαριοί; and iv. 14, οἱ διωδιζισθεὶς ἐν ὀνόματι κυρίου μακαριοί.”—THOLUCK.

peculiar character ; and in the words before us he clearly states, that this peculiar people, instead of being distinguished by worldly wealth and honour, were to be a poor, despised, and persecuted race. They were to be "persecuted for righteousness' sake."

The phrase, "for righteousness' sake," is just equivalent to, for the belief and profession of christian truth, and for the performance of christian duty. To suffer for righteousness' sake, is synonymous with suffering for Christ's sake ; suffering "for the Gospel's sake ;" "suffering as a Christian."

The term, "persecuted," is descriptive of all the variety of evils to which the followers of our Lord were to be exposed for their attachment to him and his cause, for their allegiance to his authority, and their observance of his laws. How varied and severe these evils were, is to be learned from the history of the church of Christ. The apostles, who occupied the highest place in the kingdom of heaven, were distinguished not less by their sufferings, than by their honours. "I think," says one of them, speaking in the name of them all, "that God hath set forth us the apostles last, as it were appointed to death : for we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men. We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ : we are weak, but ye are strong : ye are honourable, but we are despised. Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted, and have no certain dwelling-place ; and labour, working with our own hands : being reviled, we bless ; being persecuted, we suffer it ; being defamed, we entreat : we are made as the filth of the world, and are the off-scouring of all things unto this day."¹ And, speaking of his own individual experience, he tells us that, as a christian apostle, he had been "in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. "Of the Jews," says he, "five times received I forty

¹ 1 Cor. iv. 9-13.

stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness.”¹ The description of the sufferings of the people of God under the Old Testament economy, is equally applicable to the primitive followers of Christ. Some, many of them, “had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins and goat-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented: (Of whom the world was not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.”²

It is comparatively few of the followers of Christ, who have been exposed to persecution in so violent a form; but all his genuine followers are, in some form, and in some degree, “persecuted for righteousness.” “All who will live godly, must, and do, suffer persecution.” It has been justly remarked, that “the wicked hate the holy image of God, and those who bear it; his holy truth, and those who profess and preach it; his holy law, and those who obey and stand up for its obligation and authority; his holy ordinances, and those that attend on them.”³ The particular form of the opposition, which wicked and worldly men make to the cause of Christ, will depend on circumstances; but in all countries and in all ages, it exists, and the followers of Christ should count on being exposed to derision, reproach, slander, and it may be evils of a more formidable kind, from ungodly men.⁴

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 23-27.

² Heb. xi. 36-38.

³ Scott.

⁴ “When modern divines refer all that Scripture declares about the persecution of Christians on the part of the world, to the circumstances of those times,

It deserves and requires notice, that when our Lord pronounces his people "blessed" amidst, and on account of, persecution, it is not suffering in general he speaks of, but "suffering for righteousness' sake." It is not every sufferer, no, nor every sufferer for religion, that can legitimately claim the consolation with which our Lord's declarations are so replete. He alone can be pronounced blessed, who suffers because he will not deny the truth, because he will not violate the law of his Redeeming Lord. It is, as Augustine says, "not the punishment, but the cause which makes the martyr."¹ He who is persecuted in this cause, however severely, is blessed. It is an honour and a privilege conferred on him. "It is given to him on the behalf of Christ to suffer for his sake."²

The particular reason our Lord assigns for pronouncing those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake happy, is, that "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." I have already had occasion to explain these words in illustrating the first of the beatitudes. The phrase is commonly considered as equivalent to, 'they shall enjoy the celestial blessedness.' I have no doubt this is included in it, but this is by no means all that is included in it. It is not, 'theirs *shall be* the kingdom of heaven,' though that is true, but "theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven;" even while suffering for righteousness' sake, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven is the new economy, the order of things under the Messiah. A person enters into this kingdom when he "repents towards,"

and to the discrepancy betwixt Heathen and Hebrew, and explain, on the same principle, the sayings before us, they proceed upon a no less carnal view of the church of Christ than that which the bulk of the Jews entertained of the Messiah's kingdom; for it implies, that whoever lives within the precincts of the church is, on that very account, sundered from the *κόσμος*. The persons whose characters are drawn here, are such as have received into their hearts the Spirit of Christ. They are described as 'persecuted for his, and for righteousness' sake.' The ground of the persecution accordingly lies in that natural enmity between light and darkness, of which John speaks, ch. iii. 20; and hence, wherever there is a darkness which Christ hath not lightened, there that enmity is also found."—THOULUCK.

¹ "Martyres non facit pœna sed causa." Enarr. in Psal. xxxiv. 23.

² Phil. i. 29.

or changes his mind with regard to, "God," believes the Gospel, and is born again, "being transformed by the renewing of his mind." The privileges of this kingdom are spiritual. They are not meat and drink, or riches, or honours; they are "righteousness," justification, "peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost."¹ These are the privileges of the kingdom, and every one who enters into it, is invested with them.² These men, however despised and persecuted by their fellow-men, are happy, for they are kings and priests, or "a royal priesthood," a sacred kingdom; they have "received the kingdom which cannot be moved."³ They are already in the enjoyment of privileges and immunities, compared with which, earth's highest honours and enjoyments are but as the dust in the balance; and they are assured of, in due time, obtaining in heaven the full "inheritance of the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world."

It is obvious that, in all that our Lord had said, he had a particular reference to those who had believed on him, and that they were the persons whom he had described as "poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peace-makers, and persecuted for righteousness' sake." But he now makes a change in the form of his discourse. From general statements he turns to direct address; and, fixing his eyes benignantly on his disciples, who appear to have been seated nearest to him, he says:—"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad; for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you."

Perfect integrity was a leading feature in the character of our Lord. He never excited false hopes; nay, he never availed himself of false hopes which, irrespective of any

¹ Rom. xiv. 17.

² "Mens regnum bona possidet."—SENECA.

³ Rev. i. 6. 1 Pet. ii. 9. Hob. xii. 28.

statements he had made, men had formed. "I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest," said a scribe. Our Lord, instead of allowing the man to do so, till he should discover that He was not the kind of Messiah he expected, immediately replied :—"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests ; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head."¹ And here, in the very commencement of his ministry, he tells his disciples "what great things they must suffer for his name's sake." He tells them that they were to be reviled, and persecuted, and that all manner of evil was to be spoken against them ; and their future experience taught them, that the Faithful Witness did not lie.

But, while he tells them that "in the world they should have tribulation," he assures them also that "in him they should have peace." They would be happy, blessed, when all these things should come upon them, if their sufferings were brought upon them by their attachment to Christ and his cause ; and, if the charges brought against them were indeed false charges, amid all their sufferings they would be supported by the peace of God, and the hope of glory ; their "tribulation would work patience, and experience, and hope—a hope which would not make them ashamed." The assurance that "if they suffered along with Christ, it was that they should be glorified together with him," would support their heart, and enable them to "count it all joy when," on account of Christ, "they were brought into manifold temptations."

Our Lord not only pronounces them "blessed," but calls on them to "rejoice"—"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad." It is a strange exhortation—when persecuted and reviled, not merely be patient and resigned, but joyful and glad. This seems "a hard saying"—an impracticable precept. But our Lord's commands are "not grievous." He requires from his people nothing that is unreasonable. When

¹ Matth. viii. 20. Luke ix. 58.

the whole of the case is taken into view, the command appears in the highest degree reasonable, and the duty not only practicable, but easy: "This is the victory which overcometh the world," all difficulties, "even our faith."¹ Let a man but believe what Jesus reveals to him, and he will not feel it difficult to do what Jesus commands, or endure what Jesus appoints. The man who believes that his reward shall be great in heaven, will have no difficulty in rejoicing and being exceeding glad amid those afflictions which, however heavy, he will in this case feel light; and which, however long continued, he will regard as but for a moment; and which he knows are "working out for him a far more exceeding, and an eternal weight of glory."²

The celestial blessedness is, in one point of view, a free gift:—"The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord"³—not merited by man, but freely bestowed by God. But, in another point of view, it is a reward, as it is only in the way of doing and suffering the will of God that it can be attained, and as the measure of enjoyment in the heavenly state will be regulated according to the degree of labour and suffering in the service of Christ.⁴ How great that reward will be, we cannot tell; but a window has, as it were, been opened in heaven, and through it we have been allowed to contemplate those who have suffered for Christ, enjoying their reward:—"After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders

¹ 1 John v. 4, 5.

² 2 Cor. iv. 17.

³ Rom. vi. 23.

⁴ "The reward is vouchsafed, not κατ' ἀνάγκην, but κατὰ χάριν. It is a χάρισμα, not an ἐφ' ὅριον. Rom. vi. 23."—THOLUCK. "Gratis datur, quia gratis data est illa, cui datur."—AUGUST.

and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen : Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen. And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes ? and whence came they ? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple : and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more ; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb, which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters ; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.”¹ This is the state of those who have suffered for Christ, in the period between death and the resurrection. At that period, still higher rewards shall be bestowed on them. They “shall be brought with him” in glory, when he comes ; they shall, in a manner of which we can form no distinct conception, take a part with him in “the judgment of the world ;” they shall “sit with him on his throne, as he has overcome, and is set down with his Father on his throne ;”² and they shall for ever, in the highest degree which is competent to created beings, be participants of his joys and sharers of his honours.

The full assurance of hope, respecting the recompence of reward, was not to be the only source of support, and consolation, and joy to our Lord’s disciples, under the sufferings to which they were to be exposed for his sake. The consolation that the treatment they were meeting with, was just what the most distinguished servants of God, in former ages, had experienced, was well calculated to sustain and

¹ Rev. vii. 9-17.

² 1 Thess. iv. 14. 1 Cor. vi. 2, 3. Rev. iii. 21.

comfort them. "The same afflictions had been accomplished in their brethren, who had been in the world." The path to heaven has always been replete with sufferings of some kind or other, which called for the exercise of faith and patience. It was consolation to the primitive Christians, to think that they were only meeting with the same afflictions as Moses, and David, and Elijah, and Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and the other prophets, and meeting with them in the same cause. In such company reproach becomes praise, and dishonour glory.¹

Our Lord's primitive followers, through the effectual operation of his Spirit, were enabled to yield obedience to this apparently hard command. They experienced the truth of their Lord's declaration, that when persecuted for righteousness' sake, they were blessed—and feeling themselves blessed, they rejoiced. Hear how one, who in sufferings as in labours seems to have held the first place, describes his feelings, "For I reckon, that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors, through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God,

¹ "What a treasure of comfort must the apostles have found in this allusion! How does it steel the courage to have comrades, such comrades, in the war of afflictions! What, although it was not to the present, but to the past, they required to look for them; is not the combat, is not the triumph in which it is at last to terminate, the same? The little timorous band of the Nazarene may join the ranks of that cloud of witnesses (Heb. xii. 1) who, in the struggle for an invisible world, have sacrificed all that men value upon this earth. How animating the consciousness of fighting in fellowship with so great a company of the children of light!"—THOLUCK.

which is in Christ Jesus.”¹ “We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed: Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh.” “For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”² “For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”³ “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.”⁴ And we find the Hebrew Christians, taking joyfully “the spoiling of their goods,” “knowing in themselves, that they had in heaven a more abiding substance.” And this same principle will produce the same mode of feeling and acting, in all countries, and in all ages.

II.—THE POSITION AND DUTIES OF CHRISTIANS IN REFERENCE TO THE WORLD.

The sentences which follow⁵ were addressed by our Lord, not to the multitude indiscriminately, but to his disciples, and they are descriptive of the important and salutary change which was to take place among mankind, through their instrumentality. The truth on this subject is presented

¹ Rom. viii. 18, 36-39.

⁴ 2 Cor. xii. 10.

² 2 Cor. iv. 8-11, 16-18.

⁵ Matth. v. 13-16.

³ 2 Cor. v. 1.

to the mind under two very significant emblems ; and appropriate practical instruction is connected with each of these emblematical representations. Let us inquire into the meaning of these emblems, and seek to feel the force of the practical instructions connected with them. We are not less interested in them, than those were to whom they were originally addressed.

§ 1. *The Salt of the earth.*

“Ye are the salt of the earth.”¹

The earth here plainly symbolises the human inhabitants of the earth, or the earth viewed as their residence, and affected by their moral state. The use of the figure indicates that the earth needs salt. It is in a state of spiritual decomposition—moral putrescence. The world, mankind, are in a state of ignorance and error, of guilt and depravity—a state of which animal matter, tending to, undergoing, the process of dissolution, is a striking figure: offensiveness and danger to other sentient beings, and destruction of the putrifying substance itself, are the significant parts of the figure.

Mankind, under the influence of ignorance and error, guilt and depravity, are the proper objects of the disapprobation and loathing of the Divine Being, and of all the wise and good beings in the universe. They are perishing and—continuing under these influences—they must utterly perish—“perish in their own corruption.” The seeds of disorganisation, the elements of ruin, are within, and at work ; their operation is discoverable by all who, in any measure, have “their senses exercised, to make a distinction between good and evil,” just in proportion to their spiritual perspicacity and sensibility ; the process, as it goes forward, makes

¹ Matth. v. 13.

² ἡ stands = *κόσμος*, “the world,” v. 14; and implies mankind in general with the accessory notion of the *φθαρτός*, “corruptible,” which must be preserved by means of *ἡλας*, “the salt.”—OLSHAUSEN.

the world an uncomfortable and unsafe residence for human beings; and the miserable subjects of the malady, unless restored to health, becoming every day more loathsome, must soon be thrust into the mystical valley of the son of Hinnom, the charnel-house of the universe—the horrid receptacle of that spiritual filth, the accumulation of which would, in no long period, make our world not only uninhabitable, but without an inhabitant.

At the period our Lord uttered these words, the whole world, with scarcely an exception, was a mass of moral rottenness. The unutterable abominations of the impure and bloody systems of Paganism—manifested not only in their infamous orgies, mis-called religious rites, but in the general prevalence of vices, which ought not even to be once named among Christians—overspread the earth; and Judaism, which, even in its state of purity, having in but very small measure the power of diffusing itself, had done little to counteract the growing corruption of mankind, had now, except in a very few individuals, not only lost its savour, but become the seat and the source of an offensive pestilential disease. The language employed by the sacred historian, respecting the state of mankind immediately before the deluge, is equally applicable to the state of the world at the time our Lord uttered these words:—"The earth was corrupt before God." "When God looked on the earth, behold it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth."¹

Now, of this corrupted and corrupting earth, this mass of decomposing spiritual organisation, our Lord pronounces his disciples "the salt:"—"Ye are the salt of the earth."²

In these figurative words, our Lord announces the wonderful truth, the full import of which is, even yet, after

¹ Gen. vi. 11, 12.

² "Salt denotes proverbially one of the most indispensable necessities of life. 'Nil sole et sale utilius,' says the Roman proverb. Plin. H. N. xxxi. 9. Ecclus. xxxix. 32."—THOLUCK.

eighteen centuries, but imperfectly unfolded, that, through the instrumentality of his disciples, then so few in number, so humble in circumstances, so utterly destitute of all the forces, physical and political, by which changes among great bodies of men are usually effected; an important and salutary alteration was to take place on the characters and circumstances of mankind. The pestilence was to be in some measure arrested, the nuisance abated; the earth made a safer and more comfortable dwelling for moral agents, beings connected with God and eternity; many individuals restored to a healthy state; and their ruin—their utter ruin—as spiritual beings, which was so certainly in progress, prevented. “Ye are the salt of the earth,” is equivalent to, ‘You are to be the means of improving the world, and of saving its inhabitants. By your instrumentality the ignorant are to become enlightened, the guilty are to be brought to seek and obtain pardon, the depraved are to be made holy, the unprofitable useful, the miserable happy; men are to be made fit for presenting themselves a sacrifice to God—“holy, acceptable, rational worship.”’ You are to be the grand instrumental means by which God is to renovate the earth, to make it a wholesome, pleasant residence for men to dwell in, and superior beings to visit—to regenerate society, and to save men.¹

It is never to be forgotten, that the immediate instrument of these blessed changes is truth, divine truth—truth from God, truth about God, operating on the minds of men, influencing and guiding all their active energies, according to the principles of their rational and moral nature; and that, in man’s depraved state, a special divine influence is absolutely necessary, so to bring the mind, and keep it in contact with this saving truth, as that these blissful consequences may be realised. Men are “transformed by the renewing of the mind;” and it is the good Spirit that, by the

¹ “The course of the human race, apart from Christianity, is always downward: all its civilisation ends in barbarism.”—NEANDER.

truth, creates "the new mind," and puts "the right spirit" within men.

But that truth is not immediately revealed to every one in whom, when believed, it effectually works in arresting spiritual putrefaction, and restoring to spiritual health. Our Lord taught his disciples, personally and by his Holy Spirit, the saving truth. He transformed them by its instrumentality. He made them holy and happy beings. But this was by no means all. He not only stopped the plague in them, restoring them to health, but he constituted them his agents in healing others. Not only were they the recipients of the water of life, but out of them flowed rivers of these healing waters. The truth preached by them, and rendered permanent in their divinely inspired writings, confirmed by those miracles of which, in their writings, we have an abiding, authentic record, and illustrated by their holy lives, which, in the sacred narrative, are still held up to us—was the grand means by which the Holy Spirit, not only in their own age and country was, but in every succeeding age, to the end of the world, and to the remotest borders of the earth, is, to prove himself "Jehovah Rophi—the Lord that healeth."¹

The words, "Ye are the salt of the earth," as they were primarily applied to the apostles, and the other inspired teachers of Christianity, so they have obviously an exuberance of meaning² in reference to them; but they may be employed as strikingly descriptive of the position and duty of christian teachers in all countries and in all ages. Nay, we do not rightly apprehend our Lord's meaning, if we do not

¹ Exod. xv. 26.

² Thomas Aquinas says that the apostles are called salt, "*ratione virtutis*:" and he thus expands this thought. They have first "*virtutem saporativam*;" then they have "*virtutem arefactivam*;" then they have "*virtutem restrictivam*;" then they have "*virtutem mundificativam*;" and, finally, they have "*virtutem sanativam*;"—then they are called salt, "*ratione originis*," water and heat—the water of tribulation, and the heat of love;—and then, thirdly, they are called salt, "*ratione consuetudinis*," every sacrifice being salted with salt. This is a specimen of scholastic exegesis.

consider them as referring to the place which his people, whether holding official situations or not in his church, occupy with regard to the world, and the purpose which he means to serve by them. "Jacob," the spiritual Israel, is intended to be "in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass,"¹ for refreshing and fructifying the nations. All who know the truth, are bound by their obligations, both to their Lord, the author of the truth, and their fellow-men, to make known the truth by which they themselves—slaves as they lately were—were made free, and by which alone others can be made "the Lord's freemen." In their character, as the salt of the earth, they must bring themselves into contact with the corrupting substance. Every Christian, however limited his sphere of influence, must still, within that sphere, exert the influence which he possesses. He must exhibit truth in its meaning, and evidence, and influence: he must be a living epistle of Jesus Christ, seen and read of all men.

In the language of our Lord to his primitive disciples, "Ye are the salt of the earth," I cannot help thinking, that there is an intentional intimation, that the benignant influence of his religion, producing a favourable moral change, through the instrumentality of those who embraced it, was not to be confined within the narrow limits of the promised land, but was to pervade the whole earth—the world—reaching "to every kindred, and people, and tongue, and nation." The whole earth was corrupt before God; and, as the divine counteractive of corruption was needed by all, it was ultimately to be extended to all lands. The prophets and the pious Jews were the salt of Judea; but the apostles and their followers were to be the salt of the earth.

It is an intimation of what is the undoubted truth, that all true holiness and happiness among mankind is the result of christian truth known and believed; that the know-

¹ Micah v. 7.

ledge and belief of christian truth, so far as they depend on created agency, are diffused through the instrumentality of christian men; and, that it is the will of Christ that christian men should diffuse this knowledge and faith as extensively as possible. The earth—the whole earth—is labouring under moral putrescence, and, therefore, throughout the whole earth, is the divine counteractive to be diffused. There are two or three very important practical conclusions, which come out of this statement of the case.

In the first place, there can be no doubt of the propriety and obligation, as there can be no doubt of the necessity, of christian missions to heathen and infidel nations. They are wide-extended, putrifying marshes, and can only be healed by that spiritual salt, of whose healing virtue, the salt thrown by the prophet into the bitter empoisoned waters is a striking figure.¹ Christians who take no part in such undertakings, seem to deny either the need of the heathen world or the power of christian truth, or to disclaim at once the possession of the knowledge, and the obligation of the duty, implied in the words, “Ye are the salt of the earth.” Their conduct seems to say, the earth does not need salt, or Christianity is not salt, or we are not Christians.

In the second place, it seems equally beyond doubt, that Christians must mingle themselves with society, in order to serve the purpose of their being constituted the salt of the earth. It is not the will of our Lord, that we should be monks or hermits. It is his will that christian churches should be select bodies, “a people taken out from among the Gentiles”—“a peculiar people”—“a people dwelling alone.”² It is his will that his people in their most confidential friendships, should follow the law of the elective affinities of their new nature. But while all this is true, it is not only not their duty to go out of the world, but in all ordinary circumstances they cannot do their duty unless they are in it. The

¹ 2 Kings ii. 19-22.

² Acts xv. 14. 1 Pet. ii. 9. Numb. xxiii. 9.

world is surely the place for the salt of the world. Christians must mingle with society, and in mingling with society, they must, in the various ways which may seem best fitted to gain their object, apply to their fellow-men that truth by which alone they can be saved.

And in the third place, it seems a natural conclusion from what has been stated, that the capacity of a Christian to produce saving good, and his obligation to attempt it, correspond with the closeness of the relation in which he stands to the individuals who are the proper objects of his christian benevolence. The closer the salt can come to the body that needs it, the more intimately it can insinuate itself into the substance, the greater probability of its serving its purpose. He does not act like a Christian, who does not do what lies in him, that the whole earth should be salted. But he acts very like a fool, who makes great exertions to put down moral putrescence among the antipodes, while he allows it to exist and increase in his own country, his own city, his own neighbourhood, his own family. Home attempts to put down spiritual corruption, should not supersede foreign enterprise for the same purpose. But since the pestilence is universal, while I will do what I can to send remedies to the inhabitants of Calabar or Japan, I will especially look after my own country, my own city, my own relations, my own family. My securest way of extending the influence of Christianity, is first to influence those I am most intimately connected with, and then, through them, those with whom I have a comparatively remote connection. I expect to find the best missionary agent in the man who is most diligent and conscientious in attending to the spiritual concerns of "his own, especially those of his own house." I shall come to doubt whether that be salt at all, if what is constantly in contact with it be not salted.

The whole of our Lord's statement goes on the supposition, that, to be successful in making others Christians, and in thus making them holy and happy, we must be ourselves

Christians, we must ourselves be christianly holy and happy. We must "have salt in ourselves,"¹ if we would be the salt of the world. To be really useful as foreign or home missionaries, or christian instruction agents, or sabbath-school teachers, men must be Christians indeed; not merely men who have learned a system of theology by rote, and are fluent enough in imparting it to others, but men who know, and believe, and experience, the truth as it is in Jesus. How can men teach what they do not know? How can they exemplify what they have never experienced? It is christian truth, under divine influence, that makes men christianly good and happy; and it is just in the degree in which we find in a man christian truth embodied, and christian influence exemplified, that we find him a fit agent for advancing Christianity. "Let the dead bury their dead,"² but let them not pretend to be fit agents for promoting their spiritual resurrection.

If the professed followers of Christ, instead of holding the truth, embrace error—if, instead of leading holy lives, they live in conformity to the present evil world—it is plain they cannot serve the high and holy purposes for which they are separated from the world. Unconverted members of christian churches are plagues to the church, and plagues to the world. And however active such persons may be made in a kind of promoting the cause of Christianity, by such motives as they can alone feel the force of—and it is astonishing what exertions they can be brought to put forth—little good is to be expected, and much evil is to be feared, from their exertions. Worldly minded, untender-hearted, while, at the same time, loud, noisy, bustling, professors of Christianity, are among the worst enemies of Christ and Christianity, of the church and of the world. Instead of being such salt of the world as counteracts and even cures putrescence, they are like salt of another kind, which, when

¹ Mark ix. 50.² Matth. viii. 22.

brought into contact with putrifying substances, accelerates the progress of decomposition. These men may well make the world worse, but they will never make it better. As true consistent active Christians are the greatest of all benefactors to mankind, so there are not worse enemies to society than worldly, wicked, professors of the religion of Christ. They are "to every good work reprobate"—useless to others—and in a situation even more deplorable and less hopeful than that world, obviously lying in wickedness, of which, from their profession, they should be the active efficient reformers.

These sentiments are stated with terrific plainness, though, in appropriately figurative language, in the words that follow:—"But if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? It is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast forth and to be trodden under foot of men."¹

The salt used by the Jews, was by no means so thoroughly purified as that which we employ. It was native salt, mixed up with earthy substances, which formed a considerable portion of the whole mass. With us salt cannot lose its savour or taste, without being itself lost. With them the compound substance called salt, when long exposed to the atmosphere, had the saline particles exhaled or wasted away, and there remained an insipid, useless, earthy mass. An old but singularly trustworthy oriental traveller² states, that in passing through the Valley of Salt, near Aleppo, in Syria, he took up a piece of salt, and breaking off portions of it which had been exposed to the sun, and air, and rain, found that though they had all the external appearances of salt, they had entirely lost its taste. This insipid substance is good for no purpose. It is entirely useless. It does not even serve the purpose of manure. We are told that as vast quantities of salt were employed in the temple, as condiment for the sacrifices, that which became vapid by exposure

¹ "Nil est *tritius* quam qui vult divinus haberi, ac non est."—BENGEI.

² Maundrell.

to the atmosphere, being useful for no other purpose, was strewed, as we do sand or gravel, in the courts of the temple, to be trampled under foot. Let us endeavour to discover the meaning of this figurative representation.

Some interpreters consider the phrase "wherewith shall it be salted?" as equivalent to, "Wherewith shall the earth be salted?" As if he had said, If those who should be the instructors and reformers of the world become ignorant and wicked, what is to become of the world, must it not be consigned to hopeless corruption? This is an important and impressive thought, but it does not seem to be our Lord's thought.

From what follows—"It"—i. e., the salt—"is henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out and trodden under foot of men," it is obvious that the sense is, 'If the salt lose its taste, how is it to recover it?' The sentiment intended to be conveyed seems to be this: A professed Christian, especially if he has seemed to be distinguished for the knowledge and experience of the saving truth, and by being so, has seemed to be useful in making the world wiser and better, who becomes careless, and ignorant, and worldly, and irreligious—who loses the hold he seemed to have of truth—who ceases to manifest anything like its native influence on his temper and conduct—is in a state peculiarly deplorable. There is less probability that he shall be reclaimed than that the grossly ignorant, the openly profane should be converted. An ignorant wicked heathen, is in a less hopeless condition than an apostate Christian, whether the apostacy be avowed or silent.

This is a sentiment very strongly expressed by the inspired apostles, who had the mind of Christ:—"It is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again to repentance; seeing they crucify to

themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God : but that which beareth thorns and briers, is nigh unto cursing ; whose end is to be burned.”¹ “If after” men “have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.”²

Such individuals are in all but a desperate state, in reference to their own salvation. They *may* be saved ; but it will be as by fire. They may be saved ; but the probability is, they shall perish, must perish, because they *will* perish. They serve no good purpose. They pollute the church if they are allowed to continue in it. They have disgraced it in the estimation of men, even though they leave it, or are expelled from it. Such men are viewed in the passage as retaining the name Christian. They are still called *salt*. But they bear a name they do not deserve ; and it is not the better for them, while it is the worse for others, both in the church and the world, that they do bear so worthy a name.

A professed Christian, who does not serve the avowed purpose of his being a Christian, making men wiser and better, who is not in some measure the salt of the earth, is the object of contempt, even to worldly men. They are compelled to respect the man, though they may smile at his enthusiasm, who acts a consistent part as a Christian, in

¹ Heb. vi. 4-8.

² 2 Pet. 20-22.

endeavouring habitually that all men with whom he is brought into connection, may become, not only almost, but altogether, such as he is, Christians, with the exception of—what he is very sensible of—his defects and his faults; but they can have no respect for the man whose profession proclaims one thing, while his life declares another.

The man who, in order to secure the approbation of the men of the world, abstains from taking that part in endeavours to promote the improvement of mankind on christian principles, which his conscience tells him he ought to do, falls into a very serious mistake. Contempt, not respect, is the sentiment his conduct excites. And as this is true of individuals calling themselves Christians, so it is true of bodies calling themselves churches. It is a fearful sight, but it has often been witnessed, a body calling itself a church, “whose high vocation is to save the world around it from ruin, cursing that world with the insipidity, on which it will contemptuously trample, when they should have blessed it with a savour of life to rescue it from moral corruption—from eternal death.”¹

But what is all the disgrace which the useless professor of Christianity (the savourless salt) can draw upon himself here, in comparison of the shame and everlasting contempt which awaits him in the other world? How fearful will be the doom of the unprofitable servant:—“Cast into outer darkness,” where there is “weeping and gnashing of teeth!”²

It is quite possible that our Lord may have a reference to the use of salt in sacrifice; ‘It is by you the Gentiles shall be prepared for being laid as a sacrifice on the altar of God; and if you do not serve this purpose, instead of being laid on the altar, you will be cast out to the outer courts, and trodden on by all who frequent them.’³

¹ Bennet.

² Matth. xxv. 30.

³ “Non itaque calcatur ab hominibus qui patitur persecutionem, sed qui persecutionem timendo infatuatur. Calcare enim non potest nisi inferior, sed inferior non est, qui quamvis corpore multa in terra sustineat, corde tamen fixus in cælo est.”—AUGUSTIN.

§ 2. *The light of the world.*

The same truths which are taught us by Christians being termed the salt of the earth, are brought before the mind under a different figurative representation in the words that follow, "Ye are the light of the world."¹

"The world," that is, the inhabitants of the world, are supposed to be in a state of darkness. Darkness, in Scripture, is the emblem of ignorance, of error, of sin, and of misery. Mankind are here then represented as in a state of ignorance, error, guilt, depravity, and misery; and the disciples of our Lord are held forth as the instrumental means of dispelling this darkness, of bringing men to the knowledge and faith of the truth, and, under the influence of that truth, making them truly holy and happy.

Our Lord himself, in the highest and fullest meaning of the term, is "the light of the world," "the light of men,"² the true sun of the moral world, the source of knowledge, holiness, and happiness to man. But it is through the instrumentality of his people, that he communicates these blessings to mankind. They themselves were once "darkness," ignorant, depraved, unhappy; but through the knowledge and belief of the truth, under the influence of the Spirit, they are become "light in the Lord;"³ and being enlightened by him, like the moon and planets, though in themselves opaque bodies, when illuminated by the sun, they shine by the reflection of his light. "They hold forth the word of life."⁴ In their profession, character, and conduct, they give to the world a representation of true Christianity. Like mirrors, they reflect the glory of the Lord, as manifested in the person and work of him, who is "the image of the invisible God"—"The Father of lights."⁵

These words are, no doubt, peculiarly applicable to the

¹ Matth. v. 14.² John viii. 12; i. 4.³ Eph. v. 8.⁴ Phil. ii. 16.⁵ Col. i. 15. James i. 17. "Joannes lumen illuminatum; Christus lumen illuminans."—August., Ser. clxxii. 5.

apostles, and to the public teachers of Christianity, but they are by no means to be confined to them. Every Christian ought to consider himself as laid under obligations to communicate the blessings of Christianity, to diffuse the light with which he himself has been enlightened.

This duty is strongly enjoined by our Lord in the words which follow, and the propriety and reasonableness of it are strikingly illustrated by two appropriate figures. "A city set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light to all in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."

The general idea intended to be conveyed by these words seems to be this, 'The design of my calling you to be my disciples, is not only your own advantage, but the advantage of others; and if you do not sedulously endeavour to gain that end, you do not act in character. You act an anomalous and absurd part. It were an absurd thing to attempt to conceal a city, built on a hill, from the view of the inhabitants of the surrounding country. If it had been meant to be hid, it would not have been placed there. It is built on a hill that it may be seen. It were an absurd thing to light a lamp (so the word should have been rendered, for candles, properly so called, were not in use among the Jews), and then cover it with a large vessel, which, though it might not extinguish it, would prevent it from answering the purpose for which it was lighted. When a lamp is lighted, common sense dictates that it should be placed on the lamp-stand, that it may give light to all who are in the house. If you do not diffuse the knowledge and blessings of Christianity around, you do not serve one great—the great—purpose for which I have called you to be my disciples. You act as absurdly, as if you were, after building a city on a hill that it might be seen, to enclose it with a high wall that it might not be seen; after kindling a lamp that it may give light,

covering it with a vessel that it may not give light.' Such, I apprehend, is the force of the two figurative illustrations.

Let us now attend a little more closely to the injunction which they are intended to illustrate and enforce. "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

What are we to understand by the Christian's "light?" and what by his making it "shine before men?" The Christian is naturally, like the rest of mankind, entirely destitute of true light. "Ye were sometime darkness," says the apostle, "but now are ye light in the Lord." "Christ" gives him "light."¹ The word of the truth of the Gospel is light; when it is understood and believed, it becomes the light of him who understands and believes it. Till he understands and believes it, it is not *his* light. It shines around him, but all is dark within; but when, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, he understands and believes it, "it shines in his heart," and diffuses its purifying, cheering influence over the whole inner chambers of the soul, producing holiness and peace; nor is this all, so subtile and penetrating is this heavenly light, that, though dwelling within, it pervades the man, and, as it were, invests his whole exterior, that which his fellow-men can see, his conduct, with a holy radiance. The holy happy character formed by the truth understood and believed, discovers itself in a great variety of appropriate manifestations. This is the Christian's light: the truth dwelling in him producing holiness and peace.

If this is the Christian's light, it is not difficult to perceive what is meant by his "letting his light shine before men." The injunction obviously implies, that Christians are not to retire from the active scenes of life, but are to continue to associate with their fellow-men. The salt could not serve its purpose, unless scattered over the putrifying mass. The

¹ Eph. v. 14.

lamp, when lighted, must be placed amid the darkness which it is intended to dispel. To "let our light shine," is just to make a plain distinct profession of the truth which we have received, to do all that lies in our power to bring clearly before the minds of all with whom we are connected, that truth in its meaning and evidence, that they may believe it; and then, what is not less important, and—what, as it would appear from what follows, our Lord had primarily in view,—exhibit in our temper and behaviour the native effects of that truth on our own minds in making us holy and happy. It is equivalent to a command, never to shrink from the avowal of christian truth, nor from the performance of christian duty. "Hold forth the word of life." 'Let men see what real Christianity is.'

The great end to be sought by Christians in thus making their light shine before men is, that these men "may see their good works,"¹ and may "glorify their Father which is in heaven;"² that is, that by seeing their good works, they may be led to glorify their Father who is in heaven. The necessary consequence of letting the christian light shine, that is, of yielding to the influence of christian truth on the mind and the heart, is the production of good works. "The grace of God," which is the great subject of christian truth, teaches men to "deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this world. Christian truth, when really understood and believed, moulds the character and guides the conduct. In the degree in which men are influenced by it, and manifest its influence, they are harmless, and useful, and happy. When others see their "good works," and see that they are the result of christian principle, notwithstanding the natural enmity of the human mind and heart to christian truth, a conviction is lodged in their minds,

¹ *ἵνα ἴδῃ. Vestra opera. Opera, non vos,—splendorem, non lychnum.*—BENGEL.

² "The Lord says not here, Let your light shine before men that they may glorify you; but that they may glorify your Father who is in heaven."—TRENCH.

that that must be good, which produces such peculiarly excellent effects. The holy examples, and the abundant good works of genuine Christians, soften men's prejudices, win them to attend to the truth, and are instrumental to their conversion, by which they glorify God, and become his worshippers and servants. The exhortation of the Apostle Peter, "Have your conversation honest among the Gentiles; that, whereas they speak against you as evil-doers, they may, by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation,"¹ expresses the same sentiment as the injunction of our Lord which we have just illustrated.

When professed Christians do not let their light shine before men, do not manifest the native practical influence of the truth, but, on the contrary, act in a manner inconsistent with their profession, then men, seeing their evil works, "blaspheme that worthy name by the which" they "are called,"² and thus those who should be the means of their fellow-men's salvation, become instruments of their perdition. There is no class of men who have a more fearful weight of guilt lying on them, than worldly, inconsistent, unholy professors, especially if teachers, of Christianity.

The command of our Lord in this verse, may seem inconsistent with what he says respecting prayers, and alms, and fasting, in the sixth chapter, 1-6, and 16-18. "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward

¹ 1 Pet. ii. 12.

² James ii. 7.

thee openly. And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are : for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret ; and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." "Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance : for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face ; that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret : and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." The inconsistency is, however, merely apparent ; our Lord does not condemn the Pharisees for doing in public, such duties as are of a public nature, but for publishing and proclaiming what ought to be secret. He does not find fault with them for going up to the temple to pray, but for choosing the most public part of the street for their secret devotions ; and even in the case of public alms, it is not so much the circumstance of their publicity, as the object in view, which he censures. It is "the doing alms before men, that they might be seen of them." The seeking publicity in order to gain a selfish and unworthy object, is obviously a very different thing from giving alms under the influence of christian principle, and while not coveting public notice, yet by no means sedulously avoiding it, that "men" seeing our "good works" may "glorify our Father which is in heaven."

III. THE RELATION OF CHRISTIANITY TO THE ANCIENT REVELATIONS.

The duties of a public instructor of mankind in Christianity are multifarious and difficult. He must state the truth

clearly and fully, and he must guard against those misapprehensions which the statement of truth, however clear and full, not unfrequently occasions in ignorant, half-informed, prejudiced minds. If he content himself with merely stating the truth, he may unintentionally become the propagator of error, and his authority may be set up, and his words quoted, in support of a system, materially different from, or even diametrically opposite to, that which he meant to establish.

Our blessed Lord in this, and in every other department of the art of public teaching, has set his ministers an example, and they should follow his steps. His statements with respect to the nature of the blessings to be bestowed by the Messiah, and the character of those who were to enjoy these blessings, were equally opposed to the doctrines of the Jewish teachers, and to the sentiments almost universally entertained by the Jewish people; and he most distinctly taught, that a complete change of mind must take place in order to a participation in the advantage of that heavenly economy, which was just about to be established in the world. It was not unnatural for those who were firmly but mistakenly persuaded, that the views they entertained on these subjects were warranted by, and founded on, the Old Testament revelation, the writings of Moses and the prophets, when they heard our Lord's discourses, to come to the conclusion, that his intention was to subvert the authority of these inspired writers, and substitute his own in its room—to destroy the ancient religion, and to establish a new one on its ruins. Such a notion was entirely unfounded in truth, and its prevalence was calculated in various respects to throw obstacles in the way of our Lord's success. We find him, therefore, in the passage which follows, strongly disavowing every hostile design in reference to the ancient Scriptures, and placing in a true point of light the reference which his doctrines and laws bore to the previous manifestations of the mind of God by Moses and the prophets. "Think not," as some of you are apt to suppose, "think not that I am come to destroy the

law or the prophets : I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." ¹ He thus states his object both positively and negatively.

§ 1. *Negative—not destructive.*

"The law" is here, as in many other parts of the New Testament, employed as a designation for the five books of Moses, as distinguished from the other inspired writings of the Old Testament, here termed the prophets. "The law and the prophets," is just equivalent to, the Old Testament Scriptures.

The phrase "to destroy the law or the prophets," is peculiar, and there is some difficulty in fixing its precise signification. It is obvious that the word "destroy," is not to be understood in its literal meaning. Our Lord, in these words, does not mean to disclaim any intention to treat the sacred books as the converted Ephesians did their books of magic, when they "brought them together, and burnt them before all men." ² The word is plainly used figuratively. But when figuratively used, the word has various significations, and therefore it is necessary to inquire which of these it bears in the present instance.

The word "destroy," in its figurative acceptance, may mean to abrogate, or to violate, or to invalidate. Many interpreters understand the word in the first sense, and consider it as a declaration, that it was not our Lord's intention to abrogate the moral law. There are, however, insuperable objections to this mode of exposition. We have no right to restrict the term "law," to the moral part of the Mosaic institute: and there can be no doubt to a reader of the New Testament, that our Lord did come to abrogate the law of Moses. It belonged to a temporary, as well as a typical economy. "It was added because of transgressions, until the seed should come, in reference to whom the promise was made," ³ and then, having served its purpose, it was to cease; and, accordingly, we are informed, that our Lord has "taken it out of the way," that he has "blotted out the handwriting"

¹ Matth. v. 17.

² Acts xix. 19.

³ Gal. iii. 19.

which was against the Gentiles, that he has "nailed it to his cross,"¹ so that his people, whether Jews or Gentiles, are no longer under that "pædagogus,"² having been introduced by him into a state of mature sonship. Besides, it is plain that our Lord does not so much speak of the law properly so called, as of the five books of Moses, of which the law was a principal, but by no means the only, subject. It also deserves to be noticed, that the sense of *abrogation* does not apply to predictions as it does to laws, and still less to books containing predictions.

It does not appear to me that a more satisfactory sense is brought out by understanding the word "destroy," in the sense of *violate*. 'I am not come to violate, or to teach others to violate, the law.' For here, as in the former case, the term applies rather to the law itself, than to the books which contain an account of it, and it is not at all applicable to the prophetic writings.

I am disposed to consider the term as equivalent to *invalidate*.³ 'I am not come—as some of your teachers may surmise, and as some of you may suppose, from my teaching being so very unlike any teaching you have ever heard, while your teachers profess to derive their doctrines and precepts from the sacred writings—I am by no means come to invalidate, to represent as of no authority, or of diminished authority, these former revelations of the Divine will.'

I think it not improbable, that in mentioning, not the sacred writings generally, but "the law or the prophets," and saying, not "the law *and* the prophets," but "the law *or* the prophets,"⁴ that our Lord refers to the dishonour done to the different portions of the sacred writings, by the two dominant sects among the Jews. The Pharisees explained away many of the precepts of the law, making "void God's

¹ Eph. ii. 14, 15. Col. ii. 14.

² Gal. iii. 25.

³ καταλύει idem quod παραστρέφει.—CAMERON.

⁴ ἢ is never precisely equivalent to καί. In some cases they may be interchanged; but this is not one of them. Chrysostom repeats the ἢ thus—ἢ τοῦ νόμου, ἢ τοῦς προφήταις.

commandment by their traditions;" and the Sadducees do not seem to have admitted the divine authority of the prophetic writings; the one invalidated the law, and the other the prophets. But our Lord says, I am not come to explain away, or to deny, any part of the ancient revelation: my object is directly the reverse,—“I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.”

§ 2. *Positive—completive.*

The phrase “fulfil the law and the prophets,” is fully as obscure as “to destroy the law or the prophets.” It has been common to explain the phrase, as if it meant that the object of our Lord’s mission was to obey the precepts of the moral law in its covenant form, and endure its curse in the room of his people—to verify the various types of the ceremonial law—to introduce that spiritual system of government of which the judicial law was an emblem, and to accomplish all the various predictions in the books of the prophets respecting the Messiah. All this is truth, and important truth; but it is truth dressed, most of it, in comparatively a very artificial and very modern garb; truth put into our Lord’s words, rather than brought out of them. Besides, it is plain that the term “fulfil,” according to this interpretation, is made to signify, not one thing, but a great many things.

It has been supposed by some very judicious interpreters, that the word “fulfil” here, means fully to expound, to bring out the true meaning, in opposition to the false glosses of the Jewish teachers. That the word is used in this sense is plain from a passage in Rom. xv. 19: “I have fully preached”—literally, I have fulfilled, clearly and completely unfolded—“the Gospel of Christ;”¹ and they have thought that there is here a reference to what they consider as the expositions of the law which follow. There can be no doubt

¹ πειπλησμέναι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ Χριστοῦ.

our Lord, both personally, and by his disciples, did unfold the true meaning of much that was recondite, and much that had been misrepresented, in the Old Testament Scriptures; yet, still, I scarcely think this formed so great a part of his teaching, as to be represented as the design of his coming as a teacher; and I more than doubt if the statements which immediately follow are, strictly speaking, expositions of the law.

I apprehend the word "fulfil" is used in the sense of 'complete,' 'fill up,' 'perfect.' This is so common a use of the term, as to make it unnecessary to quote examples of it.¹ It is as if he had said, 'My design is not to invalidate the Old Testament revelation, but to complete it. It is but the first part of a great divine manifestation; I come to give the remaining and the most important part of it.' Our Lord came to complete divine revelation, both inasmuch as he came to do and suffer those things, which were to form the subject of that part of the divine revelation which yet remained to be given, and inasmuch as, by his Spirit, through the instrumentality of his apostles, he actually made that revelation. Revelation seems viewed as an unfinished building. 'Now,' says our Lord, 'I do not come to demolish it; I do not come to remove one stone of it; my purpose is to carry forward, and complete, the divine edifice.'²

In these words our Lord sanctions the divine authority of the Old Testament Scriptures, and at the same time holds himself up as the person appointed by God to finish the work which they had left incomplete, and therefore entitled certainly to not less reverence and faith, than Moses and the prophets:—The "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners," had spoken "in time past unto the fathers by the prophets," was now to speak to them "by his Son."³

In the verse which follows, our Lord, who was to complete the work of divine revelation, declares the inviolable

¹ See Luke vii. 1. Acts xiii. 25; xiv. 26. Col. i. 25. Phil. ii. 2. 2 Thess. i. 11.

² "Rabbini agnoscunt Messiam esse Legem perficere."—BENGEL. ³ Heb. i. 1.

authority of the *law*, until all be fulfilled or completed :—
 “ For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” ¹

These words have often been considered as a declaration of the perpetual authority and obligation of the moral law. That the moral law,—which is indeed just another name for the duties which necessarily rise out of the relation in which a rational and accountable being like man stands to the all-perfect Being, his creator, his preserver, his benefactor, his moral governor,—must for ever remain unrepealed and un-repealable, there can be no doubt. While man continues a rational being, and God continues an all-perfect Being, it cannot change; and this is not only an indubitably true, it is also an infinitely important, principle.

At the same time, I do not think that it is the principle our Lord states here. “The law,” is a phrase which, to a Jew, conveyed the idea of the Mosaic institution, the peculiar order of things under which the Israelitish people were placed at Mount Sinai. That is the law to which our Lord seems to refer; and I apprehend interpreters would not likely have supposed that the reference was to anything else, had it not been that they found difficulty in explaining words, which seemed to them to imply a declaration of inviolable stability to a system which was temporary as well as local, and which has in fact long ceased to exist.

If the words, however, are carefully examined, they will be found to contain in them, not an indefinite declaration of the inviolable authority of the law, but a declaration of its inviolable authority till a certain period, till certain events had taken place,—“till heaven and earth pass,”—“till all things be fulfilled.” ‘Heaven and earth passing away,’ understood literally, is the dissolution of the present system of the universe; and the period when that is to take place, is called the “end of the world.” But a person at all familiar

¹ Matth. v. 18.

with the phraseology of the Old Testament Scriptures, knows that the dissolution of the Mosaic economy, and the establishment of the Christian, is often spoken of as the removing of the old earth and heavens, and the creation of a new earth and new heavens. For example—"For, behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." "For as the new heavens, and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain."¹ The period of the close of the one dispensation, and the commencement of the other, is spoken of as "the last days," and "the end of the world;" and is described as such a shaking of the earth and heavens, as should lead to the removal of the things which were shaken.² The phrase in the end of the verse, "till all things be fulfilled," seems to refer to the typically prophetic character of the law, and to be equal to till 'all the things figured in it be—take place, really exist, till the true priest, and the true altar, and the true sacrifice, come.'

In these words there is an allusion to the language used in the previous verse. "I am not come to destroy," that is, to invalidate, the Old Testament Scriptures, but to complete them. Now the period referred to, is the period when divine revelation was completed by the Son of God. That period, I apprehend, was the pouring out of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, the giving that divine instructor who was to "teach the apostles all things—lead them into all the truth." From that period "the law," the Mosaic institution, ceased to be of obligation; it had served its purpose; it entirely, as a system, passed away. "The middle wall of partition"³ was completely taken down. But, till that period, not the slightest freedom must be used with regard to its requisitions: every one of them must be religiously observed.

¹ Isa. lxx. 17; and lxxvi. 22.² Hag. ii. 6; Heb. xiv. 26, 27.³ Eph. ii. 14.

The Jewish teachers professed a great regard for the law, yet they tampered with its authority. They explained away some of its most important requisitions—for example, the command to provide for parents—and by instituting unauthorised distinctions, they enabled men to violate it without directly outraging their consciences, as in the case of oaths.¹ It is said to have been a common doctrine among them, that their eminent teachers, and the high council, the Sanhedrim, at Jerusalem, had full power to set aside any part of the law.

Our Lord condemns such impiety, and, as it were, says, ‘I have a much greater respect for the law than those men who would represent me as its destroyer: I declare to you “not one iota or tittle shall pass from the law, till heaven and earth pass away, till all be completed.”’ The “iota” or *jod* is the smallest of the alphabetical characters used in the Hebrew language, being little more than a point, and the word “tittle” is expressive either of the little flourishes which were made in writing at the end of the Hebrew letters, or rather of the minute and almost indiscernible marks by which some of the Hebrew letters, which are remarkably similar, are distinguished from each other.² The phrase, “a jot or tittle shall not pass away,” is just a strong mode of expressing this truth: ‘No change, not even the smallest, can take place with regard to “the law,” a divine institution, till it has fully served the purposes for which it was intended, and till the period appointed for its termination by him who instituted it has arrived. Till then, every one of its minutest regulations are binding on the conscience.’

I think it likely this was said, not only with a reference to the impious freedom which the Jewish doctors, notwithstanding all their professions of reverence for the law, were in the habit of using with regard to many of its re-

¹ Mark vii. 11. Matth. xxiii. 20.

² It is a saying of the Rabbins, “si quis Daleth in Deut. vi. 4 mutaret, concuteret totum mundum.” The effect would be to change *one* God into *another* God, אֱלֹהִים into אֱלֹהִים.

quisitions, but also to prevent his disciples from supposing that they were immediately to be delivered from the yoke of ceremonial bondage. He carefully observed the law himself, and required his followers to observe it so long as its authority continued; and, in the verses which follow, states that a neglect of any of its institutions, would be anything rather than a recommendation of a person to a high place in that kingdom of God which was about to be established.

“Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments,¹ and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”² These words have generally been interpreted as if they meant ‘Whosoever shall wilfully and habitually transgress any of the requisitions of the moral law, even those which may appear the least important, that person shall be considered as the least, the most contemptible, in the christian church; while, on the other hand, the person who shall fully and honestly expound all these requisitions, and illustrate his expositions by his example, that man shall be highly esteemed, greatly honoured, in the christian church.’ Viewed in their connection, our Lord’s words appear to me to be intended to convey a somewhat different meaning.

The Jewish doctors were held in estimation, and admired for the dexterity with which they “rendered void the commandments of God by their traditions.” “But,” says our Lord, “the teacher who explains away any of the requisitions of the Mosaic law, and who encourages others in their violation of them by his example, that teacher shall be little thought of; he shall be despised and condemned in the kingdom of heaven,” under the new dispensation which the Messiah is to introduce; while, on the other hand, the

¹ Campbell’s rendering is preferable, “were it the least of these commandments.”

² Matth. v. 19.

teacher who fully and faithfully expounds the law of Moses, and pays a strict attention himself to its statutes, that man shall be called great—he shall be highly honoured and esteemed—in the kingdom of heaven, under the New Testament dispensation. Instead of encouraging his followers to disregard the law of Moses, our Lord insists on the most scrupulous adherence to it, “till all things should be fulfilled;” and when all things should be fulfilled, and not only an iota and a tittle, but the whole law, should pass away, and the kingdom of heaven should be introduced, not the neglecter or violator of the law of Moses, but the person who had strictly and conscientiously observed it, would be accounted truly honourable, worthy of all respect; so that, instead of requiring less from his disciples than the Scribes and Pharisees did from theirs, so far as the law of Moses was concerned, our Lord required more.

IV. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRISTIANS SUPERIOR TO THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

§ 1. *Introductory statement.*

“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.”¹

These words in the twentieth verse are not only deserving of our most considerate attention, as embodying a most important practical truth, but as being, so to speak, the text of a large portion of the remainder of the discourse, occupied in illustrating, by examples, how the righteousness of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven was to exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

To understand a discourse, nothing is of greater importance than a clear apprehension of its object and design. If this be not distinctly understood, the most perspicuous state-

¹ Matth. v. 20.

ments may appear obscure, the most conclusive arguments unsatisfactory, and the most apposite illustrations irrelevant. A great deal of the obscurity which, in most men's minds, rests on very many passages of the holy Scriptures, is to be accounted for on this principle. They do not distinctly perceive, or they altogether misapprehend, the object of the inspired writer; and while they do, it would be wonderful if they should clearly understand his particular statements, arguments, and illustrations. The object of the inspired writers, in any particular part of their writings, may generally, without much difficulty, be discovered; and when it is found out, it is the best key for unlocking the treasures of wisdom and knowledge therein contained. It is often distinctly stated in so many words, and when it is not so, it may usually, by a heedful perusal of the context, be satisfactorily ascertained.

I apprehend a good deal of misinterpretation has prevailed in reference to that paragraph of our Lord's sermon on the mount, in the exposition of which we are about to engage, in consequence of mistakes as to its object or design.

It has been supposed by some, that our Lord's object is to expound the law of the ten commandments, and to show, by a few examples, its exceeding breadth and spiritual reference. They suppose that our Lord asserts that the sixth commandment forbids not only murder, but malignant feeling; and the seventh not only adultery, but impure desire. That the Divine law does take cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart there can be no doubt, and that malignant feeling and impure desires are sins in the estimation of Him who looks on the heart; but whether the sixth and seventh commandments, strictly speaking, do forbid anything but what, in plain terms, they prohibit, is a totally different question, and one which, I apprehend, our Lord's statements do not furnish us with the means of answering. There is nothing, either in the way of direct statement or otherwise, to lay a foundation for the conclusion that our Lord, in the remark which

we are about to illustrate, had it for his object to show that the law of the ten commandments had a hidden, recondite, spiritual meaning beside the literal signification of the words in which it is couched.

Others have supposed that our Lord's design is to contrast the morality of the law with that of the Gospel, the morality of Judaism with the morality of Christianity. But the morality of the law, and the morality of the Gospel, the morality of Judaism, as Judaism is taught in the Old Testament, and the morality of Christianity, as Christianity is taught in the New Testament, are substantially the same. Moses requires supreme love to God, and disinterested love to man, and Jesus Christ requires no more. The details of religion and moral duty, in the two volumes of inspired Scriptures, are, no doubt, modified by the circumstances in which the church, under the old and new dispensations, was placed; but the principles of religious and moral duty appear in both to be what they are, what they cannot but be, unchanged and unchangeable, like him in whose nature they originate, and whose will they express, "without variable-ness or shadow of turning." "That which is of the Old Testament can never be *un-christian*, it is only *proto-christian*." ¹

The object of our Lord seems to us very distinctly and clearly stated by himself, in the twentieth verse. That object was to show that the system of religious and moral duty, which was to be taught and exemplified in "the kingdom of God," the new economy, was to be greatly superior to that system of religious and moral duty taught by the Scribes, and exemplified by the Pharisees; and, as the system of duty taught by the Scribes and Pharisees was generally accounted by the Jews the right one, that object was farther to impress on their minds the great truth which the whole discourse seems to be intended to illustrate and enforce, that they must "repent," change

¹ Olshausen.

their minds, now that "the kingdom of God was at hand ;" for unless they, by this change of mind, were "born again," they could not "see it," nor "enter into it ;" they could not understand its nature, nor enjoy its blessings. All that follows, from the twentieth verse down to the eighteenth verse of the next chapter, is an illustration by example of the principle here stated. Our Lord's object, then, is not to contrast the true meaning of the ten commandments with the limited signification ascribed to them by the Jewish teachers ; still less is it to contrast the morality of the law with the morality of the Gospel ; but it is to contrast the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees with the righteousness of the kingdom of God, that is, the system of religious and moral duty taught by the scribes, and exemplified by the pharisees, with the system of religious and moral duty to be taught and exemplified by the true followers of Messiah the Prince.

"The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees" is just the system of religious and moral duty taught and exemplified by the Scribes and Pharisees. That this is the meaning of the phrase is plain from the specimens of this "righteousness," which our Lord refers to in the succeeding context.

"The Scribes," so often mentioned in the gospel history, were the same class who are termed "masters in Israel," and "doctors of the law," expounders of the Old Testament Scriptures. They did not form a separate sect, though they seem generally to have been of the sect of the Pharisees.¹ The origin of this sect is involved in great obscurity. Their distinctive appellation is equivalent to separatists, and was likely assumed by them to indicate that they were distinguished from other Jews by the greater strictness of their manner of life. At the time of our Lord's appearance, they were the most numerous—and, when compared with the infidel Sadducees, and the mystical and enthusiastic Essenes, the most respectable—of the Jewish sects.

¹ Triglandius de tribus Judeorum sectis.

The Scribes were looked up to by the Jewish people as the teachers of religious and moral duty ; and the Pharisees were considered as the class which, in the most exemplary manner, reduced their lessons to practice. The highest idea which a carnal Jew could form of a religious man, was a person who, in his behaviour, conformed himself to the teaching of the Scribes, and to the example of the Pharisees. The first were considered as the best expounders of Scripture ; the latter, as the most illustrious patterns of holiness. It was a proverb among them that, " If but two men were to enter the kingdom of heaven, the one would be a Scribe, and the other a Pharisee."

Our Lord's doctrine of the necessity of repentance, or a change of mind, could scarcely be put in a form more calculated to astonish his countrymen, than that which it wears in these words. They expected that all Jews were, as a matter of course, to enter into the kingdom ; they expected that Scribes and Pharisees would occupy high places of distinction and honour in that kingdom. How must they have been amazed to hear it proclaimed that, unless a man's righteousness exceeded that taught by the Scribes, and exemplified by the Pharisees, he could not be a subject of that kingdom at all ! The general idea is, 'The religion and the morality which is to distinguish the citizens of the kingdom of heaven, is to be of a far more exalted character than that taught by the Scribes, and exemplified by the Pharisees.'

The prevailing doctrines among the Jewish teachers, in the age of our Lord, respecting religion and morality, seem to have been very corrupt. They are said to have maintained, that the doctors of the law, and the high council at Jerusalem, had a power to dispense with Divine requisitions : we are certain that, by unauthorised traditions, and by false interpretations of Scripture, they " made void the commandments of God." And the conduct of the Pharisees was not better than such a course of instruction might be expected to produce. Under an appearance of devotion,

they were strangers to the spirit of piety ; and, pretending to uncommon worth, they were deficient in ordinary integrity.¹

The righteousness taught by the scribes, and exemplified by the pharisees, was almost entirely external, and often hypocritical. It consisted almost exclusively in a round of bodily observances, and even these were often performed to serve a purpose very different from that which was avowed:—“ Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye devour widows’ houses, and for a pretence make long prayers : therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.” “ Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.”²

It was extremely partial. They made a selection among the divine precepts ; and, while they scrupulously obeyed some, and those chiefly of secondary importance, they systematically violated others, and those of prime importance:—“ Woe unto you, scribes and pharisees, hypocrites ! for ye pay tithe of mint, and anise, and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith : these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”³

It proceeded from principles defective or unsound—not from the fear and love of God—from respect to his authority, and a desire to please him—from disinterested benevo-

¹ For many of the thoughts and expressions in this sketch of the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, I am indebted to Dr Brewster.—Lectures, p. 126-134.

² Matth. xxxiii. 14, 25-28.

³ Matth. xxiii. 23.

lence, or even from enlightened self-love ; but from low, confined views of self-interest—from a wish to obtain human applause, and secure wealth and honour for themselves. “ But all their works they do for to be seen of men : they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments, and love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.”¹

And, while in their religion and morality there was thus so much wanting, and so much wrong, they yet plumed themselves on it, as if it gave them a title, not merely to the respect of men, but to the favour of God ; not only to the good things of earth, but to the joys of heaven. They thanked God that they were not as other men. They “ trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and contemned others.” They said, in exact correspondence with the appellation they had assumed to themselves, “ stand by, we are holier than you.”

Such was the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees ; and our Lord’s assertion is, that the subjects of the kingdom of God must be characterised by a much more elevated kind of religion and morality. Their righteousness must be spiritual and sincere ; it must be universal ; it must originate in, and be sustained by, pure motives ; and it must never be made a ground of confidence before God, or an occasion of self-gratulation, or vain boasting.

The righteousness or religion which characterises the true subjects of the Messiah, is not, like that of the scribes and pharisees, merely external ; nor is it, as very generally in the case of the latter, hypocritical. What is external in it, is the expression of thought and feeling, and the genuine expression of thought and feeling. Its principle is, “ God is a Spirit ; and they who ” would “ worship him, must worship in spirit and in truth.” “ I serve God with my spirit,”

¹ Matth. xxiii. 5-7.

says the apostle Paul ; “ we are the circumcision ”—that is, the true people of God, the spiritual Israel—“ who worship God in the spirit.”¹

Universality, in opposition to partiality, is another distinguishing feature in the righteousness by which the true subjects of the Messiah are characterised. Knowing that every part of the divine law wears the stamp of supreme authority, they “ account its commandments concerning all things to be right, and abhor every wicked way.”

In opposition to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, the righteousness which distinguishes the subjects of the Messiah, originates in, and is sustained by, motives rising out of the character and will of God, and our duty and happiness as connected with these. The rule is, “ Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not to men.”²

And, finally, the righteousness of the subjects of the Messiah, unlike that of the Scribes and Pharisees, must never be made a ground of confidence before God, or an occasion of boasting. The man who is under the influence of the views which the Gospel unfolds, cannot place confidence in anything but in the mercy of God manifested in consistency with his righteousness, through the mediation of Jesus Christ. His obedience, even though it were perfect, could not afford him who has already violated the law, and incurred its penalty, any reasonable ground for hope of pardon and salvation ; and knowing, as he does, that his best services are defective and sinful, he sees that they never can deserve to be rewarded, for their own sake, but need to be graciously accepted, for the sake of his Saviour ; and well aware that, if his heart and life be more in accordance with the mind and will of God than those of some of his fellow-men, it is owing entirely to the operation of divine influence,—he sees that he has great cause of gratitude,

¹ John iii. 24. Rom. i. 9. Phil. iii. 3.

² Col. iii. 23.

but no ground of pride, for that it is "by the grace of God, that he is what he is." This characteristic feature of the righteousness of the subjects of the Messiah's kingdom, is beautifully delineated in the following words of one of the holiest of these subjects:—"Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith." ¹

To prevent mistakes—mistakes of vital importance to the interests of the soul—it is necessary again to remark that the design of our Lord is not to state the terms on which men may obtain the Divine favour, but to delineate the characteristics of the religion of those who are in possession of the Divine favour. It is not our Lord's intention to say, 'You must first obtain possession of this righteousness, so far superior to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and then, as the reward of your exertions in making this acquirement, you shall be made partakers of the blessings of the kingdom of heaven;' but it is his intention to say, 'You have not entered into that kingdom; you are not possessed of its privileges and immunities, whatever may be your external professions, if you are not characterised by this righteousness.' The truth is, that the faith of the Gospel, by which a man enters into the kingdom, at the same time introduces to the enjoyment of the privileges of the kingdom, and forms to the character of a willing, obedient, happy, subject of the kingdom. The answer to the question, *How is this righteousness to be obtained?* is, *Through the faith of "the truth as it is in Jesus."* That truth, believed, "purifies the heart;" the manifested "grace of God" through Christ Jesus, and that alone, effectually

¹ Phil. iii. 8-9.

“teaches to deny ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly.”¹

§ 2. *The righteousness of Christians, and that of the Scribes and Pharisees compared, in reference to the life and happiness of others.*

Having stated the general principle, our Lord proceeds to illustrate it by a variety of particular instances, in which the righteousness of those who enter into the kingdom of heaven, must exceed that taught by the Scribes, and exemplified by the Pharisees. “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.”² This is the first specimen of the righteousness of the scribes and the pharisees; and it is very good, so far as it goes.

The words rendered “by them of old time,” are susceptible of various translations. They may be rendered “in ancient times,” or “to the ancients;” or, as our translators have rendered, “by the ancients,” or them of old time. It does not matter very much which of these modes of rendering is adopted; though, upon the whole, we consider that of our translators as the preferable one.

By “them of old time,” some understand Moses, in whose writings, no doubt, the words “thou shalt not kill,” are to be found: but it seems unnatural to call Moses “them of old time;” we rather think our Lord here quotes the very words of the scribes and pharisees, when teaching their disciples. “Ye have heard,” is just equivalent to—“the Scribes and Pharisees are accustomed, when explaining human duty, to use this language—“It is said by them of old time,” that is, by the elders in their traditions, “Thou shalt not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment.”

In teaching this department of human duty, they confine their attention to the overt act of violence and murder; and

¹ Acts xv. 9. Tit. ii. 11, 12.

² Matth. v. 21.

they fix the mind on the temporal punishment awarded by the law for this crime, as that which should chiefly or solely operate on the mind as a motive against committing it. The scribes and the pharisees teach that men should not take away one another's lives ; and, as a motive to induce them to comply with this law, they say that he who violates it is "in danger of the judgment ;" or rather, is liable to, is exposed to, the judgment. "The judgment" is here the name of a criminal court. In every city in Judea, according to Josephus, there was a court, consisting of seven judges, who had the power of life and death.¹ That court is here termed "the judgment."

The statement of the Scribes and Pharisees, then, is just as if a person in this country were saying, 'It is the law of the land that no man commit murder ; and if any man violate this law, he is liable to be brought before the High Court of Justiciary, and tried ; and, if found guilty, to be punished with death.'

In this specimen of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, we see that it is the external conduct only for which they legislate, and that it is temporal punishment alone by which they represent the law respecting murder to be sanctioned.

But let us hear our Lord explain what, on this particular head of moral duty, is that righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and without knowing and exemplifying which, a man cannot be a subject of the Messiah's kingdom :—"But² I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment ; and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council ; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell-fire."³

The general meaning of these words is plain enough : "The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees" speaketh on this

¹ Bell. Jud. I. i. xx. 5.

² "Εγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν. Illud ἐγὼ acute pronunciandum."—PAPCZUS. ³ Matth. v. 22.

wise—‘Thou shalt not kill, and if thou dost, thou must be tried for thy life;’ but “the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven” says—‘Thou shalt not cherish malignant feeling towards any man, nor manifest it in any way: and if thou dost, thou wilt offend God, and expose thyself to severer punishments than any which man can inflict on man.’ But let us look at the words somewhat more closely. Let us see what the righteousness of the kingdom forbids, and then let us see what are the punishments which it denounces on those who commit the crimes it forbids.

It forbids our being “angry with our brother without a cause,” that is—it forbids all unreasonable anger,—anger without a sufficient reason; and it moreover forbids all immoderate anger, that is, anger in a higher degree, and for a longer time, than is lawful. The lawfulness of anger has been questioned by some christian moralists, but on very insufficient grounds. The very words before us seem to imply, that if it be forbidden to be angry “without a cause,” it is, at least, permitted to be angry with a cause. The Apostle Paul commands us to “be angry and sin not”—words which seem to intimate, not only that it is possible to be angry without sinning, but that there are circumstances in which we would sin if we were not angry. The Apostle James seems to teach us the same truths when he bids us “be slow to wrath;”¹ and we know that the perfect Exemplar of holiness in human nature was not incapable of this emotion; for we read, on one occasion, that he was not only “grieved for the hardness of the hearts” of his audience, but “he looked round on them with anger.”²

It is obvious, however, that the principal, if not the only occasion when anger is lawful, is, when it is directed against sin; and then the strong feeling of disapprobation is expressive of zeal for the Divine honour, and is quite compatible

¹ Eph. iv. 26. James i. 19.

² Mark iii. 5. “Merito *ὀργῇ* additum. Neque enim iracundus est quisquis irasci solet, sed qui *ὀργῇ* οὐ διὰ, καὶ ἰσὺς οὐ διὰ, καὶ μᾶλλον ἢ διὰ, ut Aristoteles loquitur.”—GROTIUS.

with, and ought always to be accompanied by, a sincere wish for the true happiness of him with whom we are angry. Whenever it proceeds from pride and selfishness—when ever it is accompanied with malignant feeling towards its object—it is, undoubtedly, sinful; and when we think of the difficulty of regulating this passion, and the great hazard of its hurrying us into offences against the law of love, we surely should have very good cause, before we venture to indulge in it. It is obvious that all causeless anger is sinful; all anger without a good reason, and all anger which, in degree or continuance, exceeds the reason which may exist.

A second thing forbidden by “the righteousness of the kingdom,” is the calling our brother “raca.” In the dialect generally used among the Jews in the time of our Lord, “Raca”^b was a word of contempt and displeasure which angry persons were in the habit of applying to the objects of their displeasure. It means an empty, insignificant, worthless fellow. The qualifying phrase, “without cause,” seems intended to extend to all the three statements made here. We are not, without a cause, and without a very sufficient cause, to say of another person, he is a worthless fellow, nor to say to him, you are a good-for-nothing miscreant. There may be a good reason, however, for saying this, and a great deal more than this, both of, and to, men. Our Lord uses worse words than *raca* both of and to the Scribes and Pharisees; but he does not do it “without a cause.” All abusive language is forbidden by the law of the kingdom—all language expressive of malignity and of undue anger or contempt.

A third thing forbidden by this law, is the saying to a brother, “Thou fool,” or rather *Moreh*; for, I apprehend, the word is not a Greek, but a Hebrew one,¹ and,

¹ The word מורה, here used by the evangelist, differs only in number from מורים, the compellation by which Moses and Aaron addressed the people of Israel, when they said (Numb. xx. 10), with manifest and indecent passion, as rendered in our English Bible, ‘Hear now, ye *rebels*,’ and were, for their punishment, not permitted to enter the land of Canaan.—*Vide* CAMPBELL. *Pref. to Matthew's Gospel*, § 25.

^b See Note B.

like *raca*, should not have been translated—a word expressive of still greater contempt and detestation—signifying a rebel and apostate. This was the worst thing a Jew could say of a Jew. This part of the law of the kingdom prohibits all rash reflections on our neighbour's character, and especially all harsh judgments respecting his spiritual state. There may be cases in which the law of love absolutely requires us to say to a man that he is an apostate, while we use every means in our power to reclaim him. But what is forbidden here is the using such terms without sufficient reason, and as an expression of malignant feeling.

Let us now attend to the punishment to which, according to the law of the kingdom of God, these offences expose him who is guilty of them. "He who is angry at his brother without a cause is in danger," is liable to be exposed to "the judgment." I have already stated that "the judgment" was the name of those inferior law courts, one of which was to be found in every Jewish city, which took cognizance of ordinary crimes, such as murder, and had the power of life and death. These words are not to be interpreted literally, for certainly Messiah the Prince has not erected any court similar to that which the Jews termed "the judgment," by which persons who are guilty of causeless anger are to be tried and punished. The meaning is, 'He who is causelessly angry with his brother is, in my estimation, not less worthy of punishment than he who, on account of a crime committed by him, is dragged before "the judgment," and is by the assessors condemned.'

He who calls his brother "raca" is in danger, or is exposed to "the council." The council here means the Sanhedrim—the highest court of judicature among the Jews, both political and ecclesiastical, consisting of seventy judges. The seat of this court was Jerusalem. This court took cognizance only of the more flagrant crimes, and had the power of condemning, not only to death by the sword, but by stoning, which was accounted a more severe and dis-

graceful mode of punishment. The meaning of our Lord's statement, then, is—'He who not merely cherishes unreasonable anger against his brother, but uses reproachful and contemptuous language towards him, is guilty of a still greater crime than he who is only "angry at him without a cause," and is exposed to a punishment proportionally severer.'

He who calls his brother "fool," or rather "moreh," rebel, apostate, miscreant, he is "in danger of hell-fire." The phrase "hell-fire" is literally "the gehenna of fire." "Gehenna" is the Syro-Chaldaic word for the valley of Hinnom, or of the son of Hinnom, called also Tophet. This was a fertile valley, lying to the east of Jerusalem, which had been the scene of some of the most abominable rites of idolatrous worship.¹ Here it was customary, during the prevalence of idolatry, to burn children alive, in honour of Moloch or Baal; and the name of Tophet, which signifies a drum or tabour, was borrowed from the custom of attempting to drown the cries of the victims by such noisy music. After the return from the captivity, the Jews showed their abhorrence of the transactions of which this place had been the scene, by making it, after the example of Josiah, the receptacle of dead carcases, and other filth cast out of the city; and fires were kept constantly burning in it to consume this refuse. Hence the Jews came to use the word "gehenna" as the name of the place of punishment after death.² In this sense, it is generally used in the New Testament. In the passage before us, we understand it literally. Our Lord's meaning seems to be: 'He who not only is angry with his brother without a cause; who not only, without a cause, speaks to him contemptuously and reproachfully; but who, without a cause, charges him with apostacy, calls him not only foolish, but wicked, holds him up not only to the contempt, but to the hatred, of mankind,—his guilt is still greater, and he deserves

¹ 2 Kings xxiii. 10.

² Vide S. Petiti *Lectiones Variæ. Critici, Sacri.* Vol. vii.

still severer punishment. If he who is angry without cause deserves to be tried and punished by the judgment, and he who calls his brother "raca" deserves to be tried or punished by the Sanhedrim, he who calls his brother "moreh" deserves to be cast out as refuse into the valley of Hinnom, and there to be consumed.

The general idea is, the law of the Messiah's kingdom is much more strict in its requisitions, and terrible in its sanctions, than the Mosaic law as expounded by the scribes and pharisees. Under the Jewish law murder is punished; but under the christian dispensation, unreasonable anger will be esteemed as black a crime, and punished as severely as murder is among the Jews, and all malevolent affection and the expression of it, will expose to punishments, the least of which will be more severe than that awarded by the Jewish law to him who deprives his fellow-man of life.

Let us remember, my friends, that we live under this dispensation, and that if we enjoy its advantages, we are exposed to its hazards. Let us never forget the declaration, that "he who hateth his brother is a murderer, and we know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him."¹ Let us remember that none who are characterised by "hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, envyings, murders"—that none who do these things—"shall inherit the kingdom of God." Let us remember that it is the law of our Lord, that we love one another as he hath loved us:—"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:" and "put on, therefore, as the elect of God, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering: forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."²

In the words which follow, our Lord draws some import-

¹ 1 John iii. 15.

² Gal. v. 20, 21. Eph. iv. 31. Col. iii. 12, 13.

ant practical conclusions from the statement he had made, the substance of which may be thus expressed :—‘ Religious worship cannot be acceptable, while he who offers it continues under the influence of malignant principle ; and as malignant principle exposes to the displeasure of God, and will be punished by him, it is the interest of all to rid themselves of its bondage, before they stand at his judgment seat, where a final and irreversible sentence will be pronounced on them.’

Such is, I apprehend, the general meaning. Let us now examine the words somewhat more particularly :—“ Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way ; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”¹

It was the doctrine of the Scribes, and the practice of the Pharisees corresponded with it—that anger, hatred, and the expression of these, if they did not go so far as overt acts of violence, were among the minor faults—and that God would not severely judge men for these, if they were but regular in presenting their sacrifices, and observing the other external duties of religious worship. In opposition to this, our Lord teaches, that, according to the righteousness of the kingdom, having one’s mind not subject to the law of justice and love, would render all external religious services unacceptable to God.

Under the law of Moses, various gifts and sacrifices were presented, some of these were absolutely obligatory, and the occasions on which they were to be offered are very particularly described ; others, though not expressly prescribed, were considered as becoming tokens of religious gratitude. These were denominated “ free-will offerings,” as their being presented was left to the option of the worshipper. Some have supposed that there is a particular reference to this last

¹ Matth. v. 23, 24.

species of religious gifts in the passage before us; we rather think that the word is to be understood in its general sense, and that when "thou bringest thy gift to the altar," is just equal to, When thou art about to perform a solemn act of religion. If at that time the individual remembered that his brother had ought against him, he was to leave his gift before the altar, and go his way, and be reconciled to his brother, and then come and offer his gift.

A "brother," here, is equivalent to a fellow-man. For are we not all brethren? Hath not God "made us all of one blood?" "Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?"¹ To "remember that our brother has ought against us," is to recollect, that we have done some injury to him, that we have treated him in some way or other unsuitable to the relation in which we stand to him, not as a brother—to be conscious that we have wronged him.

In this case the person, instead of offering his gift, is to go immediately to his brother, and to be reconciled to him; dismissing all malignant feeling from his mind, he is to repair the injury he has done to his brother. If he has deprived him of his property, he is to restore it; if he has calumniated him, he is to do all that lies in his power to counteract the effect of his calumny, and acknowledge his regret for having acted so unbrotherly a part. In this way he is likely to be reconciled to his brother, that is, to be restored to his brother's favour.

And here I may remark by the way, that, in the New Testament, to be reconciled to an other does not signify so much to cherish kindly feelings towards one with whom we have been offended, as to be restored to the favour of one whom we have offended. This throws light on one of the most important exhortations in the word of inspiration, addressed to sinners:—"Be ye reconciled to God," that is, not 'lay aside your dislike of God,'—though that too is a duty

¹ Acts xvii. 26. Mal. ii. 10.

—but it is “Be restored to the Divine favour which you have forfeited.” “Receive the grace,” the free favour, “of God.” In the faith of the Gospel, enter on the possession of the blessing of having for your God “Him, who is in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing unto men their trespasses.”¹

On being reconciled to his brother, the offerer is to return to the temple, and then present his gift. The general principle is this, the person who is conscious of an unrepaired wrong to his fellow-man, cannot be an acceptable worshipper of God.

It is necessary here, however, to guard against mistakes. The man who rests his hope of the acceptance of his religious services, on the consciousness of his brother having nothing against him—on the consciousness of his having wronged no man—is leaning on a broken reed. The only ground of hope for the acceptance of our persons or services is the free grace of God; but it is a plain proof, that that grace is not believed by me, and therefore cannot be the ground of my hope, if it is not influencing my temper towards my brethren of mankind. The man who wilfully injures a brother, and persists in that wilful injury, gives plain evidence that the love of God is not shed abroad in his heart, and he cannot be an acceptable worshipper, till, having obtained mercy himself through the faith of the truth, which faith working by love, will immediately lead him to repair all injuries which he is aware of having done to his brother.

This passage is strangely supposed by many to have some peculiar reference to the Lord's Supper, and is often grossly abused, as if it furnished a reason for neglecting the observance of that ordinance, when any of our fellow church members has done anything to displease us. These persons seem to act as if the words ran, not ‘if thy brother have ought against thee,’ but ‘if thou hast ought against thy

¹ 2 Cor. v. 18-21.

brother.' If any of my fellow church members do anything that offends or displeases me, the first question I ought to ask myself is, Ought I to be offended or displeased? And if I am convinced on good grounds that I ought, then my duty is to go to my offending brother, and tell him his fault alone; and if this does not reclaim him, then I am to go with one or two brethren to remonstrate with him; and if this is ineffectual, then I am to bring the matter before the proper ecclesiastical assembly: all this is my duty;¹ but in no step of the process can this form a proper reason for my neglecting to do my duty in obeying our Lord's command—"Do this in remembrance of me." But the passage has no peculiar reference to the Lord's Supper; it teaches the general doctrine, that religious worship, performed by a person under the influence of an unjust and malignant disposition, cannot be acceptable to God, and this is just as applicable to secret prayer, as to observing the Lord's Supper.

Our Lord proceeds to urge the duty of being immediately reconciled to the brother whom we have injured, lest, dying under the guilt which unrepented of and unrepaired injuries to our brother necessarily involve, we should be plunged into hopeless destruction. For this does seem to me the force of the words in the twenty-fifth verse, "agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison."²

Some very good interpreters, I am aware, consider this verse as containing a counsel of prudence with regard to the management of differences, an advice to avoid as much as possible going into law-courts to have them decided. Such a counsel will be readily admitted by all to be a wise one; and it could scarcely be couched in more appropriate terms.

¹ Matth. xviii. 15, 17.

² Matth. v. 25.

But still I cannot help thinking, that such a mode of interpretation strangely breaks the train of our Lord's illustration, and weakens the force of his argument, besides making the explication of this verse itself exceedingly perplexed. The language of these verses is evidently too strong to be confined to the effect of an unsuccessful litigation; and, accordingly, those who explain them in this way, commonly suppose that they have an ultimate reference to the last judgment, thus giving at once a literal and metaphorical sense to the same words.

"Agree with thine adversary" is the same as "be reconciled to thy brother,"—"Seek restoration to his favour by repairing the injury you have done him. For you and he are like two litigants going to the judgment-seat. You are as certainly going forward to the tribunal of God, where your injury against your brother will become the matter of judicial inquiry,—as if the man you have injured were dragging you before a human court of law. There is no time to be lost. Should you die while malice rankles in your bosom, and the wrong you have done is unrepaired, then you are as it were finally delivered into the hands of the judge; there is no longer room for reparation. "Should you die in such a state, what would be your portion? Dying under the influence of malignity, you must be utterly unqualified for joining the blessed assembly above, where all is peace and love. If you die in a state of mind unfit for worshipping God on earth, will you not be still more unfit to worship him in heaven? You are in danger then of being cast into a prison from which you will never escape, of being called to make a reparation which you will never be able to pay, of being delivered over to a punishment which will never come to an end."¹ "Verily, I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing."²

¹ Brewster.

² Matth. v. 26.

§ 3. *The righteousness of Christians and that of the Scribes and Pharisees compared, in reference to chastity.*

In the verses which follow, our Lord brings forward another example of the superiority of the righteousness of the kingdom of God, to "the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees." It is borrowed from that department of moral requisitions which have a reference to chastity; "Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart."¹

In the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, the man who was guilty of the crime of adultery, was considered as unchaste; anything short of this, seems by them to have been considered as not inconsistent with the character of a good man; but in the righteousness of the kingdom the desire of sin is sin; and he who allows himself to cherish, in any degree, a wish after what is forbidden, is considered as a transgressor. The wanton look, the impure imagination, the irregular desire, are, in the estimation of the one Law-giver, violations of the law of purity.

No sin is more strongly prohibited in the law of Christ than impurity. "Fornication and all uncleanness," says an apostle, "let it not be once named among you."² No species of sin is more degrading to the intellectual and moral nature of man. "Fleshly lusts war against the soul." They obscure the mind, they harden the heart, they pervert the affections. They unfit the mind for the exercises and the pleasures of religion, and in their unhappy victim all the emotional part of our nature seems strangely converted into one depraved feeling of brutal selfishness.³

¹ Matth. v. 26, 27.

² Eph. v. 3.

³ Burns—One who unhappily could speak from experience on this subject—one never to be named but with admiration, and pity, and strong moral disapprobation,—says, most strikingly:—

"— Oh, it hardens a' within,
And petrifies the feeling."

This species of sin is in direct opposition to the design of God in the gospel economy. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication : That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour ; not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God : For God hath not called us unto uncleanness, but unto holiness."¹ Christ "gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people."²

Impurity is utterly inconsistent with fellowship with God, and, if indulged in any of its forms, will assuredly exclude from the enjoyment of the celestial blessedness :—" Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats : but God shall destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for fornication, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." " Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make them the members of an harlot ? God forbid." " Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body ; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What ! know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own ?"³ " Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?"⁴ " Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived : neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."⁵ " For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."⁶ " The fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 3-7.² Titus ii. 14.³ 1 Cor. vi. 13, 15, 18, 19.⁴ 1 Cor. iii. 16.⁵ 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.⁶ Eph. v. 5.

idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”¹

To temptations to impurity in some of its forms, we are constantly exposed, and it requires constant vigilance to avoid falling before some of them. There are a few advices which, on this subject, I would affectionately urge on the attention of the young. Be on your guard against loose and unprincipled companions. “Be not deceived; evil communications corrupt good manners.” It is impossible to associate intimately with the profligate without danger. Abstain from the perusal of books tainted with impurity. These are scarcely less mischievous—in many cases they are more so—than the company of the wicked. The deliberate perusal of such books is a plain proof that the mind and conscience are already in a deeply polluted state. Keep at a distance from all indelicate and even doubtful amusements—I allude chiefly to theatrical amusements—where the mind is exposed, in many instances, to all the evils at once of depraved society, and licentious writing. Seek to have your minds occupied, and your affections engaged with “things unseen and eternal.” Habitually realise the intimate presence of that God, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. Never forget that his eye is on your heart, and that “all things are naked and opened” to him; and, as one of the best and most effectual methods of mortifying your members which are on the earth—crucifying the flesh with its affections and lusts, “Set your affections on things above;” “Seek the things which are at God’s right hand.”² Never tamper with temptations, but “flee youthful lusts;” watch and “pray that ye enter not into temptation.”³

With a particular reference to sins against purity, our Lord lays it down as a general principle, applicable to all violations of the Divine law, that there is no degree of self-denial

¹ Rev. xxi. 8.

² Col. iii. 2-6.

³ 2 Tim. ii. 22. Matth. xxvi. 41.

to which we ought not readily to submit, in order to secure ourselves from the commission of sin, the natural result of which is unqualified and everlasting destruction :—" And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee : for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell."¹

The meaning of the word " offend " here is not to ' displease,' but to ' make to stumble,' to ' become an occasion of sin.' The general meaning is, ' We are resolutely to part with everything, which has proved, or is likely to prove, the occasion of sin to us, however valuable and pleasant it may be, and however much in the way of painful feeling and strenuous exertion the sacrifice may cost us.' Take a familiar illustration. A person is fond of wine : it is agreeable to his taste ; it is useful in refreshing him after severe exertion. But he finds that this taste has seduced him into intemperance ; he finds that there is constant danger of its doing so. He has fallen before the temptation again and again. What is such a person's duty ? According to our Lord, it is obviously to abstain from it entirely,—on this plain principle, that the evil he incurs by abstaining, however keenly felt, is as nothing to the evil to which the intemperate use of wine subjects him—even everlasting punishment in hell : and to make this abstinence his duty, it is not necessary that he should know that he will fall before the temptation ; it is enough that he knows that, as he has repeatedly fallen before it, he may fall before it again.

Our Lord supposes the alternative to be, on the one side, the parting with a right hand, or a right eye ; and, on the other, the body being cast alive into the fire

¹ Matth. v. 29, 30.

of the valley of Hinnom, and there consumed to ashes. Who would not part with a right hand, or a right eye, to save life, much more to avoid the horrors of such a death? Were men acting on the same principle with regard to the interests of the immortal soul, they would not hesitate for a moment to part with any present pleasure or advantage, which they were conscious, as a temptation or occasion of sin, exposed them to the hazard of spending an eternity amid degradation and torment, of which the pollutions and fires of the valley of Hinnom are apt but most imperfect figures.

This passage has been by some understood too literally, and they have thought it their duty absolutely to mutilate their bodies in order to save their souls. The members of the body are but the instruments of sin : if the evil principle be mortified, the members of the body will not be abused ; and, if it remain unmortified, the cutting off a right hand, and the plucking out a right eye, will be of no use.

Our Lord's statement proceeds on the principle, that the mortification of sinful passions may be exceedingly painful ; but if men consent to lose their limbs, by most excruciating operations, to save their lives, what ought they to shrink from, if it be necessary, in order to the salvation of the soul ? The reason why men are so backward to give up with what is pleasant and useful to them, when it exposes their soul to hazard, is their not really and firmly believing that the loss of the soul is that tremendous evil which the Scriptures represent it ; or that, what they love and value, does indeed tend to lead them into sin, and thus expose them to this tremendous evil. No man will part with his right hand, or his right eye, if he is not persuaded that this is necessary to save him from suffering incomparably greater than their loss can occasion. But let him once be persuaded of this, and he will count him a benefactor, who deprives him of them ; nay, rather than run the risk, he will himself cut off the right hand, and pluck out the right eye ; and, it is equally true, that there is no advantage or pleasure which

a man will not immediately abandon, if, under the power of the world to come, he is convinced that its abandonment is necessary, in order to his being saved from everlasting destruction. Any possession, or pursuit, or amusement, or enjoyment, however useful, however agreeable I may find it, must be rejected and renounced for ever, if it be to me, though it may not be to others, a necessary source of temptation, or occasion of sin. "Though it should be a source of pleasure, though it should be a means of gain, though it should be a step to honour, though it should, by habit and use, have become a part of myself, dear as a right eye, useful as a right hand, I must count it as nothing when compared with the hazard of losing the life, the happiness, of my soul."

Men are very apt to think and feel, though they may not say it, that this part of our Lord's law is a hard saying; but let it be tried in the balance of sound common sense, and say if it is not in the highest degree right and reasonable. Is it hard to require men to do for their souls, what they readily admit they ought to do for their bodies? If the body is not more valuable than the soul, and if time is not longer than eternity, and if death is not more dreadful than damnation, the words of our Lord are "words of truth and soberness."

Are we, my brethren, acting as if they were so? Are we as careful to keep out of the way of temptation, and to avoid every kind of unnecessary intercourse with the wicked, as to keep out of the way of evident danger, and to avoid every infectious disease. Would we rather go into a fever hospital than into a theatre? Are we as readily touched with penitence, when we have fallen into sin, as we are filled with regret when we discover that we have caught a dangerous distemper? Are we as diligent in using the means of restoration to spiritual health as to bodily? Are we as grateful to a friend for caution against a sin he thinks us in danger of committing, as we would be to him for a hint not to take a path where he suspected we were likely to be robbed or murdered?

Alas! how very different, how directly opposite, is the real state of matters with the great body of mankind. They carefully avoid unwholesome food, and keep at a distance from every infected habitation; but they recklessly mingle with the wicked, and engage in ensnaring amusements. They are alarmed by the first symptoms of bodily disease, and use every method for obstructing its progress, and effecting its cure; but they treat the strongest symptoms of spiritual disease as matters of little importance, and obstinately refuse to employ the means which the Great Physician has appointed, as requisite in order to a cure. They thankfully receive cautions in reference to the health of their body, if they think it really in danger; but they often indignantly spurn at every hint given them in reference to the salvation of the soul, and seem to count him an enemy who speaks to them of the snares amid which they are walking, and points out to them the manner in which they may escape being entangled to their everlasting destruction.¹

This is not an unjust representation of the character and conduct of many who would be offended, were we to call in question their faith in Christianity. Yet, no inconsistency can be more glaring than this. By-and-bye it will be seen to be so. The miserable victim of his own obstinacy, in the regions of hopeless misery, feels now—alas! that he could not be brought sooner to believe it, that it would have been better for him to have parted with what he felt to be dear as a right eye, and useful as a right arm, than to be cast, as he has been, into hell-fire.

§ 4. *The righteousness of Christians and that of the Scribes and Pharisees compared, in reference to divorce.*

In the thirty-first and thirty-second verses, our Lord gives a farther illustration of the superiority of the righteousness of the kingdom of God, to the righteousness of the Scribes

¹ Brewster.



and Pharisees. "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."¹

Every one who has read the first verse of the twenty-fourth chapter of Deuteronomy, to which our Lord seems here to refer, knows that divorce was permitted by the law of Moses. This permission was granted, however, only to prevent greater evils. It was found to be necessary for the hardness of the hearts of the Jews. Had they not been allowed to separate from their wives when they had taken a dislike to them, they might, by the violence of their tempers, have been led to treat them with cruelty. It deserves notice, that they were not commanded to divorce their wives in the circumstances specified, they were only permitted to do so; and to prevent them doing it hurriedly, and without consideration, they were required to give the wife a bill of divorcement written out in due form, and the separation, when thus effected, was final. By thus requiring divorce to be a solemn, and making it an irrevocable transaction, provision was made, as far as was practicable, for preventing its being done under the influence of passion, or for a trivial cause.²

The expounders of this law, however, disregarded altogether its object. They even considered permission as a precept, and taught that 'men might put away their wives for every cause.' If the Scribes taught in this way, the practice of the Pharisees corresponded with their teaching. Every opportunity was seized for putting away their wives and marrying others. The great intentions of marriage

¹ Matth. v. 31, 32.

² "The Mosaic law, intended for a rude people, placed restraints upon unlimited wilfulness. Political legislation must adapt itself to the material on which it has to act. The permission—for it was no more—was owing to *εὐλογισμὸς τοῦ λαοῦ*. Matth. xix. 8."—NEANDER. "The law of the kingdom" is not a state-law.

were in a good degree frustrated. Full encouragement was given and taken to furious passions, and irregular desires. Many cruelties were committed, and great misery produced.¹

This was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees with respect to marriage. But the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven was of a higher order, and "speaketh in this wise:" "But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced, committeth adultery."² According to this law, adultery is the only sufficient reason of divorce. He who for any other cause puts away his wife, is to be held an adulterer if he marry another woman; and she, by marrying him, commits adultery; while, at the same time, he becomes the guilty occasion of adultery, if the woman, who is still his wife, marry another man; for in this case she commits adultery, as he also does who marries her.

Our Lord, in another place (Matth. xix. 4, 5), shows very plainly that the indissolubility of marriage, as well as the propriety of that relation being confined to one man and one woman, were intimated in the circumstances in which it was instituted. "God created them at first, a male and a female,"³ one man and one woman, "thus putting it beyond their power to be united to more than one, or to separate from each other to join another connection. He thus taught them, that any other arrangement would neither be conducive to their happiness, nor agreeable to his will, and intimated that they should continue through life wholly devoted to each other."⁴

Few things have done more to promote the happiness and the moral improvement of man, than our Lord's re-establishing the principle, that the conjugal relation is indissoluble save for one cause. Let all who stand in this relation to

¹ Brewster.

² Matth. v. 32.

³ Campbell.

⁴ Brewster.

each other, seriously consider the nature of their relation, and the importance of their duties. Let them reflect, that since they form as it were one body, they ought also to have one mind and heart. Let them reflect, that as they are so intimately connected, they ought to cherish each other with the same attention and affection, as they do their own bodies. Let them strive to have the same inclinations, as they have the same interests, and guard against all disputes and disagreements. Let them beware of all irritating language or disrespectful treatment, and always show each other every becoming token of civility and kindness. Let them bear with each others infirmities ; study each others tempers ; endeavour to correct each others faults. Let them always conduct themselves with gentleness, and perform their respective duties faithfully, though they may not receive the return they have a right to expect. Let them suppress every dislike which might produce in their mind even a wish to be separated, or which might render them more remiss in the duties which they owe to each other. Let them forbear, and forgive, and conciliate, and comfort, and cheer one another. Let them consider themselves as bound to promote to the utmost of their power, not only the present prosperity, but the future felicity of each other. Let them often together draw near to the throne of their common Father, and pray for one another, mutually exhorting, instructing, and comforting one another. Let them, in fine, live together as heirs of the grace of life, as those who know that death, the only lawful cause of separation, will ere long cut the otherwise indissoluble bond ; and let them seek to be bound together by a tie, which even death itself cannot dissolve,—even the faith of the same truth, the love of the same Saviour, the hope of the same salvation. Thus will they spend a happy lifetime together on earth : Thus will they spend a happy eternity together in heaven.¹

¹ Brewster.

§ 5. *The righteousness of Christians and that of the Scribes and Pharisees compared, in reference to oaths.*

Our Lord now brings forward a fourth illustration of the superiority of the righteousness of the kingdom to that of the Scribes and Pharisees, not less striking than any of those which we have considered. "Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths: But I say unto you, Swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." ¹

Let us first inquire into what the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees teaches on the subject of oaths; and then into what the righteousness of the kingdom teaches on the same subject, and in the course of this inquiry, it will become very evident that the righteousness of the kingdom greatly exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

The sum of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, was a prohibition of perjury. They taught that oaths, solemnly uttered in the name of Jehovah, were binding, and that he who violated them was guilty of a great sin. So far all was right. The righteousness of the kingdom teaches the same thing. He who can deliberately declare a falsehood, under the sanction of an oath, or refuse to perform, what he has not only promised, but sworn to, is obviously guilty of a shocking complication of impiety, falsehood, and injustice. It is impossible too strictly to prohibit, or too strongly to condemn, this crime.

But the Scribes, in their doctrine with respect to oaths,

¹ Matt. v. 33-37.

while in words they held that perjury was sinful, did much to lessen the solemnity of an oath, and to smooth the way for this worst form of falsehood. They made a distinction among oaths. According to them, some were binding, others were not. The obligation of an oath depended upon the nature of the object by which the person swore.¹ Oaths to or by God, which are particularly specified in the text, were obligatory, and all oaths taken before a magistrate were of this kind. But, with the exception of oaths by the gold of the temple, and by the sacrifices of the altar—which, for some selfish or superstitious reason, they held to be binding—they appear to have taught, that to swear by any created thing was of very little consequence, created no obligation, and might be done in common conversation without sin; and the practice of the Pharisees seems to have been such as might have been expected from such teaching of the Scribes. They prohibited false swearing by God, but they did not prohibit unnecessary, and therefore profane swearing, even by God; and they considered oaths, where the Divine name was not mentioned, with the two exceptions above referred to, as harmless expletives, and destitute of obligation.

Such was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. But what saith the righteousness of the kingdom?—"I say unto you," says the one Lawgiver of that kingdom, "swear not at all: neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil."²

The contrast between the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the righteousness of the kingdom of God,

¹ Matt. xxiii. 16. Oaths by the gold, *i. e.*, the treasure of the temple, were binding. "The *φιλάνθρωποι* thought the oath by their god mammon had the greatest force. Luke xvi. 14."—OLSHAUSEN.

² Matth. v. 34-37.

has been variously stated. Some interpreters have supposed that our Lord meant to say, 'The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees condemns false swearing; but the righteousness of the kingdom proscribes swearing altogether. The first prohibits perjury; the last aims at making perjury an impossibility, by prohibiting swearing.'

These interpreters seem, however, to have misapprehended our Lord's meaning. There is plainly nothing in the nature of the thing which makes an oath criminal. If there had, it never could have been enjoined at all by Divine authority, as it obviously is:—"Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name."¹ An oath is simply an appeal to the Omniscient One who searches the heart, and the just Governor of the world who punishes fraud and falsehood, as to the truth of our testimony, and the sincerity of our promises. It is merely expressing in plain terms what ought to be present in the mind in all our declarations. We find the Apostle Paul repeatedly making affirmations, under the solemnity of an oath:—"Moreover, I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth." "For neither at any time used we flattering words, as ye know, nor a cloak of covetousness; God is witness."² We find our Lord answering to the high priest's adjuration, which was the Jewish mode of taking an oath.³ We find an angel represented as "swearing by him that liveth for ever and ever:"⁴ we find God himself introduced as swearing.⁵ All this seems quite unaccountable, if our Lord's meaning here was that, under the New Testament economy, swearing in every form was unlawful. While, then, I cannot consider these words as an absolute prohibition of "the oath," it is very obvious that the call to use it must be

¹ Deut. vi. 13.

² 2 Cor. i. 23. 1 Thess. ii. 5.

³ Matth. xxvi. 63, 64.

⁴ Rev. x. 5, 6.

⁵ Gen. xx. 26. Isa. xlv. 25. Jer. xlix. 13; li. 14. Amos vi. 8. Psal. lxxxix. 3, 35; cx. 4.

very plain and distinct, to make it safe to have recourse to it. The greater part of the oaths which prevail in society do nothing but mischief. The requiring them is a temptation to sin, in one of its most heinous forms, before which multitudes fall. They do not prevent the evil which they are intended to guard against. They increase it. If oaths were never imposed, and never taken, but with an enlightened and pure conscience, there would be but little swearing.¹

I apprehend that our Lord himself limits the reference of what he says to ordinary conversation, when he says, "Let your *communication*² be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay." He does not refer to judicial transactions at all, but to the ordinary intercourse of life.³

The contrast between the law of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the law of the kingdom, is this—The first prohibits only false swearing in judgment by the name of God—the latter prohibits all vain unnecessary swearing in ordinary conversation, not only by the name of God, but "by any other oath," as the Apostle James expresses it.⁴ "I say unto you," says our Lord, "in your communication, swear not at all,"⁵—use

¹ Bengel's note is good. "Multi veterum Christianorum simpliciter hanc literam acceperunt, eoque facilius juramenta ethnica declinarunt: vide tamen Ap. x. 6; Jer. xxiii. 8; Es. xlv. 23, qui locus tempora N. T. spectat: Contra hodie periculum est ne paucissima in tot juramentis vera sint; et in veris paucissima necessaria; et in necessariis, paucissima libera, fructuosa, sancta et læta. Multa ad pompam, ad calumniam, ad compescendas suspiciones justas, comparata sunt." "Μὴ ὁμῶς sponte, ultro, absque necessitate, in omni omnino casu, in communibus rebus."—EPISCOPUS.

² ἡ λέξις ὑμῶν.

³ Calvin has hit the point of contrast. "Deus non modo perjuriam damnavit, sed jurandi levitatem quæ nominis ejus reverentiæ derogat. Neque enim is solum accipit nomen Dei frustra, qui pejerat, sed qui in rebus frivolis, vel in communi sermone temerè et contemptim nomen Dei arripit." "The Saviour forbids absolutely such oaths only as are hostile to the reverence that is due to God."—THOLUCK, whose note deserves to be consulted.

⁴ James v. 12.

⁵ "The ὅλας 'at all,' which perplexes Augustine so much, and has perplexed so many, is doubtless to be interpreted and limited by what immediately follows. All these kinds of oaths which I specify are forbidden you. You do not, by using them, avoid taking God's name in vain. For why have these oaths anything binding? It is God's presence in these created things which gives them any hold over your consciences. Every oath is an awful thing, and, in its ultimate ground, rests upon God, though the lightness and frivolity of men cause them willingly to conceal this fact from their eyes."—TRENCH.

no oaths, no approximation to oaths, in your ordinary conversation—not merely do not swear by God, but do not swear at all, for all oaths, if they have any meaning, are in reality addressed to God. “Swear not by heaven, for heaven is the throne of God,” and he that swears by heaven, if his words are not empty sounds, swears by that throne, and him who sits on it. “Swear not by the earth, for the earth is God’s footstool,” and he that swears by it, swears by the God whose footstool it is. “Swear not by Jerusalem,” for if the oath have meaning, it is an oath by the God who has chosen Jerusalem as the seat of his worship. “Swear not by the temple,” for that is to swear by him who dwells in it. “Swear not by your own head,” for that too belongs to God—it is his far more than yours—you did not, you cannot, make one of its hairs—you cannot, by your will, even change the colour of one. An oath by your head, if it be not absolutely unmeaning, is an oath by the universal Creator and Proprietor. Every oath, just because it is an oath, is an ultimate reference to Deity. Carefully avoid everything like a profane or irreverent reference to God; abstain from all such unmeaning, or worse than unmeaning, asseverations.

“But let your communication,” your ordinary conversation, “be yea, yea; nay, nay.” These words, taken by themselves, seem most naturally to convey this idea—‘Speak the truth at all times.’ Even when not called solemnly to swear by God, let your yea be yea—let your nay be nay—according to the Jewish proverbial mode of describing a man, whose word and promise may be trusted—“His yes is yes—and his no is no.”¹ The apostle uses the phrase in this sense when he states “the promises of God in Christ are yea and amen;”² certain, infallible, truths.

At the same time, viewed in contrast with what goes before,

¹ “His yea in word is a yea in deed, and his nay in word is a nay in deed.” The word corresponds with the thought, and feeling, and purpose, and the deed will correspond with the word.

² 2 Cor. i. 20.

and with what follows after, it seems plain, that this is not our Lord's idea here. The meaning is 'Be content with simply stating the truth, whether you are affirming or denying, and if any person question the truth of your assertion, just repeat it, but do not confirm your assertions with anything in the form of an oath or asseveration. If you have an assertion to make, or a denial to make, do so simply, without any oath, or anything approaching to an oath.'

"For whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." These words may be rendered "cometh of the evil one," but we prefer the rendering of our translators as more comprehensive.¹ The use of strong asseverations, oaths, or approximations to oaths, can proceed from no good cause. It may proceed from the person's knowing that what he utters is false, and therefore stands in need of confirmation. He is conscious that he is saying what is not true, and therefore concludes that he may not be believed, as he knows he deserves not to be believed. For this reason he seals his word with his oath, in order to secure for it the credit he knows it does not merit. Surely, when it cometh from this cause, it "cometh of evil;" it were better to retract his word than to support it with an oath. To swear to a lie is a double sin—it is adding perjury to falsehood. Or it may proceed from a person's being suspected of falsehood. If the person is justly suspected of falsehood, then it cometh of evil. If he is justly suspected, it must be because he is addicted to falsehood; and the only way of getting a better character is not to make strong assertions, but henceforward scrupulously to speak the truth. Indeed, with all reflecting men, the use of unnecessary oaths and asseverations, will only make a man's testimony more and more suspected. If the person is unjustly suspected of falsehood—then in justice to himself, to

¹ "I consider it as a maxim, in translating—that when a word is, in all respects, equally susceptible of two interpretations, one of which, as a genus, comprehends the other,—always to prefer the more extensive. 'The evil one' is comprehended under the general term 'evil.'"—CAMPBELL.

discredit such uncharitable suspicions, he should positively refuse to confirm his declarations by an oath. To swear in such a case, is an admission that his word is not sufficient. He who is known to be a liar, will not get credit even by his oath—and he who is a man of truth, voluntarily exposes his character to suspicion when he condescends in ordinary conversation to confirm his word by swearing.¹ Or the practice may proceed from a principle of irreverence, a want of a due fear for that great and terrible name, the Lord our God; and I need not say this is evil—the root of all evil—the want of the fear of God. It cannot proceed from anything better than a reckless disregard of the Divine declaration, that “for every idle word that men speak, they must give an account in the day of judgment.”² It must be plain to every person, that all profane swearing, and even what are ordinarily termed minced oaths, are completely forbidden by the law of the kingdom of heaven. Such is our Lord’s fourth illustration of the superiority of the righteousness of the kingdom of God, to the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.”³

§ 6. *The righteousness of Christians, and that of the Scribes and Pharisees, compared in reference to retaliation.*⁴

We are presented with a fifth illustration in the thirty-eighth and succeeding verses. “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth;

¹ Brewster.

² Matth. xii. 36.

³ Since writing the above, a somewhat different exegesis has suggested itself to my mind, and though not so fully satisfied with it as to substitute it for the common one adopted in the text, I think it right to indicate it here, for the consideration of scholars. I have always felt it as odd to apply “these” to the particles “yea and nay.” May the pronoun not refer to “oaths”—the subject of the whole paragraph? May not the clause be translated “for the superabundance of these comes of evil?” and may not the statement mean—“All unnecessary oaths are wrong—the undue multiplication of oaths is a great evil?” As Bengel, with his characteristic conciseness, says, “Nimietas viciosa.”—Surely, if in anything, in solemn appeal to God—especially, as in oaths, with imprecation of his vengeance—there should be “*NEQVIV NIMIS*.” It is a good advice though coming from a heathen:—*ἔστω σφραγισμένη ἡ μὴ εἶναι τοῦ ἔσθω, εἰ δὲ μὴ ἴα τὴν ἐξέστω.* “Avoid swearing altogether if you can; but if not, then as much as is possible.”—*EPICETUS*.

⁴ “*Lex talionis.*”

but I say unto you, That ye resist not evil ; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee ; and from him that would borrow of thee, turn not thou away.”¹

In the law of Moses we meet with the following enactments :—“ And if a man cause a blemish in his neighbour ; as he hath done, so shall it be done to him.”² “ Eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.”³ “ And the judges shall make diligent inquisition : and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother ; then shall ye do unto him as he had thought to have done unto his brother : so shalt thou put the evil away from among you.”⁴ It is evident, however, that this law was intended to guide the magistrate, and to show how far he might go in inflicting a penalty, or granting a compensation, for acts of cruelty and injustice. This *lex talionis* is the rule of justice which naturally suggests itself to every man, and is the basis of the ancient Greek and Roman legislation. As Tholuck well says, “ it is an elastic law,” in the good use of the term. It is not a rule or precept for the conduct of injured individuals. They were not authorised to take such vengeance themselves, nor were they required to insist on such strict retaliation in the laws of justice. It was intended, not to foster the spirit of revenge, but on the contrary, to prevent that spirit from breaking out into violations of law and order, by putting it in the power of the injured person to obtain legally an exact requital, so far as was possible, for what he had suffered.

But the Scribes had in this case, as in many others, per-

¹ Matth. v. 38-42.

² Exod. xxi. 24, 25.

³ Lev. xxiv. 19.

⁴ Deut. xix. 18, 19, 20.

verted the Divine law. Its language meant, in their "righteousness," something very different from what it did in the law of Moses. The words were viewed by them as recommending, or even requiring, strict retaliation; and it has been supposed that they went so far as to intimate, that individuals were at liberty to avenge their own wrongs, and that it was their duty to do so, provided they did not exceed the measure of punishment prescribed in the law. The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, permitted and cherished a spirit of resentment, and sanctioned the desire of retaliation and vengeance.

How different, how far superior, was the righteousness of the kingdom of God:—"But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee; and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away."¹

To "resist evil,"² is very much the same thing as to avenge ourselves; it is to set ourselves, as it were, in an attitude of opposition to our assailant, to show him that we are determined to repel his threatened violence, to resent the mischief he may occasion us, to render back evil for evil, and to avenge ourselves for our losses and sufferings.³

Now our Lord informs us, that all this is wrong according to the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven. Its subjects are not, either by personal violence or by vindictive legal prosecution, to manifest a revengeful spirit. That there are cases in which a man may be not only authorised, but re-

¹ Matth. v. 39-42.

² It matters little whether *καὶ ἀντιστάμεν* be considered as masculine or neuter, as the evil doer or the evil deed, the injurer or the injury. The latter, for reasons likely to occur to every mind, is, however, the preferable exegesis. It includes the former. Most certainly they err who refer the word to him who is emphatically "the wicked one." We are expressly bound to "resist him." James iv. 7.

³ Brewster.

^c See Note C.

quired, to protect his own life, liberty, and property, at the peril, and by the punishment, of the illegal assailant, there can be no doubt; but in every such case, the animating principle must not be vindictive. It has been very justly remarked "that in the present state of human nature, there is but little need to enumerate exceptions and limitations to such general rules as that before us. Self-love will suffice, and more than suffice, to prevent us from going too far in such a direction. In all ordinary cases it is better to give way, and yield to insults and injuries, than to repel them by force or by legal process. It certainly does not accord with the spirit of Christianity, to put the life and the soul of a man in competition with a sum of money, however great, when there is no reason to fear further violence to ourselves or to others. In smaller matters, however, from which our Lord selects his examples for the illustration of the general precept, there is no room for hesitation or doubt. If a man give a disciple of Christ a contemptuous or painful blow on the cheek, it is his duty and wisdom to imitate his Master, and to take it patiently, nay, to turn the other, and expose himself to a repetition of the insult or injury, rather than to begin a contest, by returning the blow,¹ sending a challenge, or commencing a process at law—even although he should be ridiculed for his want of manly spirit, in consequence of his obedience to the law of his Lord. If a man be sued at law, and be unjustly deprived of his 'coat,'² or inner garment, which, though not of great value, he yet might be ill able to spare, he had better suffer himself to be defrauded of his "cloak,"³ or upper garment, than be involved in the temptations

¹ "Why is the *right* cheek specified, although, when we strike—striking with the right hand, we strike the left cheek? Maldonatus (one of the best of the Roman Catholic interpreters) correctly answers: "*Non cædendi consuetudinem, sed loquendi secutus est;*" it being always the custom to mention the *right* first."—THOLUCK.

² *Χιτὼν*, is the under coat made of linen or cotton, which folded closely to the body—the Roman "tunica."

³ *Ἰμάτιον* is the cloak worn outmost, made of various stuffs, according to the fortunes of the wearer—from camel's hair to the richest silk. It hung loose about the body, corresponding with the Roman "toga," or rather "pallium."

and evils of seeking legal redress. Under many pretences, unreasonable men make demands on our time and our labour; and, in many cases, it is better quietly to comply with their demands than to resist them. If a man insist on my going a mile out of my way to serve him, I had better go two than quarrel about it."¹ From the use of a word borrowed from the Persic, descriptive of compulsory labour performed in the service of the state, "the compeller" here is to be understood as some official, requiring the person referred to to serve as a guide or messenger.

This command of our Lord, thus illustrated by the examples he brings forward, plainly does not forbid us to defend ourselves when we are in danger. To do so is one of the strongest instincts of our nature, the law of God written on our heart. But with regard to personal injuries, when there is no hazard of life, as in the case specified, it is our duty to repress resentment, and to abstain from violence. In like manner, there are cases in which it is plainly a man's duty to avail himself of the protection which the law gives to property. Justice to his creditors, to the public, to his family, may require him to defend his estate, though even this must not be done under the impulse of private revenge. But we ought to have resort to the tribunals of justice, only when the cause is important and the call urgent—we are to prosecute our claims with humanity, moderation, and a spirit of peace—we are to be content with reasonable satisfaction, and embrace every opportunity of terminating our contests.

In reference to personal liberty—there can be no doubt, that, next to the blessings of a good conscience, and the hope of eternal life, it is one of the most valuable privileges. Every man and every Christian should be ready to do much and suffer much, in order to secure it and retain it for himself and others. Yet at the same time, he will not only

¹ Scott.

"patiently submit to every necessary burden, and constitutional restraint," but, in obedience to our Lord's precept, he "will bear much of the insolence" of men "dressed up in a little brief authority," "overlook many stretches of power, and endure even a variety of acts of oppression, rather than have recourse to violence and tumult."¹

The injunctions in the forty-second verse are a farther illustration of that noble, generous spirit, which the righteousness of the kingdom requires in the subjects of the Messiah—which prevents a man from standing on every point of right, and induces him, instead of insisting on rendering evil to all who have deserved it at his hand, to do good to those who have no particular claim on him. The words are plainly to be understood with very considerable limitations.² They cannot possibly mean, that we should give and lend to all persons, without considering what they need to receive, or what we are able to bestow. To do this, would be equally inconsistent with the dictates of Scripture, justice, and common sense:—"A good man showeth mercy, and lendeth;" but then, it is added, "he will guide his affairs with discretion." "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth."³ "For I mean not that other men be eased, and you burdened; but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your

¹ Brewster.—Tholuck has, with great felicity, in a few words summed up the true meaning of these precepts. "Christ, with indefinite generality, declares in what way the Christian is to act when he happens to be subjected to violence. The application of the precept, however, is in many ways conditional upon a regard to God's glory, the good of the injurer, and the good of the community." Olshausen's idea as to this, and the paragraphs about marriage and oaths, that they are applicable to τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν, but not to τῇ πόλει, is most unsatisfactory, and absolutely amazing, coming from so good a man.

² Jerome would limit the precept to spiritual things; but this is quite arbitrary. And what is it to lend and borrow in these? There is much good sense, however, in his remark—"Et divites si semper dederint, semper dare non poterunt."

³ Eph. iv. 28.

want; that there may be equality.”¹ “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.”² “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.”³ “He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.”⁴ From these passages, it is plain that we are to give or lend, with discretion, to those who have need—out of our abundance, as God has prospered us—according to our ability; and that we are to impart to another, not the whole, but a portion, of what we possess more than he.⁵ Our Lord recommends a kind and liberal spirit, inciting a man to do good to the utmost of his power. Such was the spirit of Christ to an impoverished world, and such is the spirit of his religion. It has been finely said, “Selfishness is in every shape and form antichristian.”

To all to whom God has given the means of beneficence, we proclaim the law of the kingdom; and that it may make the deeper impression, we proclaim it in the express terms of the divine statute-book:—“Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it.”⁶ “As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”⁷ “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.”⁸ “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.”⁹ And, as motives

¹ 2 Cor. viii. 13, 14.

² Acts xi. 29.

³ Brewster.

⁷ Gal. vi. 10. See also 1 Tim. v. 8.

⁸ Heb. xiii. 16.

⁵ 1 Cor. xvi. i, 2.

⁶ Luke iii. 11.

⁸ Prov. iii. 27.

⁹ Phil. ii. 4.

which must be found irresistible by every christian heart, we put them in mind of "the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive;" and of his work, in which his grace so marvellously displayed itself, in that, "though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich."¹

§ 7. *The righteousness of Christians, and that of the Scribes and Pharisees, compared in reference to regard and treatment of enemies.*

A sixth, and certainly no less striking and conclusive, illustration of our Lord's principle, that the righteousness of the kingdom exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, is contained in the verses which now come before us for explication:—"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy." This is "the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees"—"But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."² This is the righteousness of the kingdom. Surely there is a superiority, an infinite superiority, of the righteousness of the kingdom above the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees!

But that we may be the more impressed with this superiority, let us consider somewhat more closely the respective

¹ Acts xx. 35. 2 Cor. viii. 9.

² Matth. v. 43-48.

requisitions of the two contrasted moral systems. The passage before us is a very satisfactory confirmation of the general view which we have taken of our Lord's object in this section of the discourse, that it is not to contrast the Jewish false commentaries on the law of God with the true meaning of that law ; that it is not to contrast the morality of the law with the morality of the Gospel, the morality of Moses with the morality of Christ ; but that it is to contrast the system of religious and moral duty taught by the Scribes, and exemplified by the Pharisees, with the system of religious and moral duty to be taught and exemplified under the new economy about to be established by the Messiah. The first part of the moral precept, in that particular dogma of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, is, so far as the words are concerned, to be found in the Pentateuch, though bearing a very different meaning from that which the Scribes attached to it ; the second is, neither as to language nor as to sentiment, to be found anywhere in the Old Testament Scriptures, and is, indeed, in direct opposition to the spirit of the morality taught by Moses and the prophets. In Leviticus xix. 18, we meet with this injunction—"Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people ; but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In the estimation of the Scribes, the persons who, under the designation of neighbours, are represented as the proper objects of love, are exclusively their compatriots—their fellow Israelites, those who belonged to their nation, or who professed their religion. If they had carefully studied their sacred books, they would have found that the Egyptians are represented as the neighbours of the Israelites ;¹ and that, in the very chapter where the words referred to occur, the following words are also to be found : "And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born

¹ Exod. xi. 2.

among you, and thou shalt love him as thyself; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.”¹ Strangers, equally with neighbours, are represented as the proper objects of such a love as we bear to ourselves; and though there are passages in which “neighbour” signifies one with whom, by common origin or vicinity of residence, we are peculiarly connected in contrast with a foreigner or stranger, yet the manner in which it is employed in the Decalogue, is sufficient of itself to show that the term is often used to denote mankind at large, with all of whom every individual is connected by a variety of ties. When they were prohibited from bearing false witness against their neighbours, they were certainly prohibited from bearing false witness against any one; and when they were prohibited from coveting the wife as the property of the neighbour, surely the prohibition had a universal reference. The command to love their neighbour, properly understood, was a command to love all mankind; and, by consequence, absolutely prohibited malignant feeling—for, “if we love all our neighbours of mankind, there will remain none to hate.”²

But if the first part of this dogma of the Scribes, though expressed in scriptural language, was utterly unsupported by Scripture, rightly understood, the second part of it is directly opposed equally to the letter and spirit of scriptural morality. There is no such command in the Old Testament as “Thou shalt hate thine enemy.” There is no such sentiment expressed under any form of words. On the contrary, the opposite sentiment is clearly and frequently taught. As proof of this, we appeal to the following passages of the Old Testament Scriptures:—“If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or his ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again. If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lying under his burden, and wouldest forbear to help him; thou shalt surely help

¹ Lev. xix. 33, 34. See also 1 Sam. xv. 28. 1 Kings xx. 35.

² Brewster.

with him.”¹ “Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth ; and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth ; lest the Lord see it, and it displease him, and he turn away his wrath from him.”² “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat ; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink.”³

It is true, indeed, that the Israelites, as the executioners of the Divine righteous judgments on the enormously wicked inhabitants of Canaan, were required to destroy them. The language used on this subject is very strong. “Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.”⁴ “And when the Lord thy God shall deliver them before thee, thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them ; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor show mercy unto them : neither shalt thou make marriages with them ; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.”⁵ “Thou shalt not bow down to their gods, nor serve them, nor do after their works ; but thou shalt utterly overthrow them, and quite break down their images.”⁶ “Therefore it shall be, when the Lord thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven ; thou shalt not forget it.”⁷ These injunctions, however, laid no foundation for the general principle that it is lawful to hate enemies. These nations were criminals, righteously appointed to extermination on account of their remarkable crimes ; and the Jewish people were appointed to carry the sentence into execution. Even in this case, they were not warranted, far less commanded, to *hate* the unhappy criminals whom they were yet appointed to punish, and to suppose that these injunctions justified them in hating their enemies, and in ranking among their enemies all who did

¹ Exod. xxiii. 4, 5.² Prov. xxiv. 17, 18.³ Prov. xxv. 21.⁴ Deut. xxiii. 6.⁵ Deut. vii. 2, 3.⁶ Exod. xxiii. 24.⁷ Deut. xxv. 19.

not belong to their nation, and adopt their religion, was altogether an unwarranted assumption ; and was, indeed, a making void God's commandment by man's tradition.

The substance of the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees on this point, seems to have been—'Jews are bound to love and do good to Jews; but they are not only permitted, it is a part of their duty, to cherish dislike towards the Gentiles.' Their statement is faulty in three important respects: They gave an unduly limited sense to the word neighbour; they reckoned all who were not neighbours, in their sense of the word, as enemies; and they considered themselves as allowed to hate their enemies.¹

The doctrine of the Scribes was but too well suited to the malignant and selfish principles of human nature, and we find the Pharisees, and the Jews generally, acting under its influence. A heathen historian, speaking of the Jews, says, "They readily show compassion to their own countrymen, but they bear to all others the hatred of an enemy,"² and the Apostle Paul describes them as "contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved."

We find the same malignant and selfish principle manifesting itself among other nations as well as the Jews. The Greeks and Romans looked on foreign nations with sentiments of malignant contempt, and treated them with the greatest injustice and cruelty, and there is but too much of the same spirit to be traced even in our own times, both in public transactions and in private life.

"Lands intersected by a narrow frith
Abhor each other—mountains interposed,
Make enemies of nations, who had else,
Like kindred drops, been mingled into one."³

In opposition to this righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees, our Lord declares the righteousness of the king-

¹ Brewster.

² Tacit. Hist., v. 5.

³ Cowper's Task.

dom :—" But I say unto you, Love your enemies." ¹ This precept is equivalent to a prohibition of malignant feeling towards any human being ; a command to cherish kind wishes towards all mankind. Instead of warranting us to confine our benevolent regards to what we may consider our neighbours—our kindred, or countrymen—our benefactors, or friends—men of our own sect, or even religion—our Law-giver commands us to embrace, in the wide spread arms of our benevolence, all mankind,—strangers, foreigners, heathens, even enemies. Every human being is to be regarded with good will ; and, as we have opportunity, to be treated with kindness. It is quite obvious, that we are not required to regard with precisely the same kind of feelings a christian brother, and an openly profane and profligate person—a generous benefactor, and a malignant inveterate enemy. It is not possible—and, if it were, it would not be proper—to cherish the same tender regard for strangers, as for " our own, those of our own household," the same gratitude to enemies as to benefactors, the same esteem for the bad as for the good. But we are to regard all men, even our enemies, with love, that is, we are sincerely to wish them well, we are to desire their good, we are, as we have opportunity, to promote their happiness.

In the clauses which immediately follow, our Lord illustrates what he means by loving our enemies :—" Bless them that curse you." To bless a person, in Scripture, often means to implore blessings from God on him, and had this clause stood alone, I should have been disposed to interpret the phrase in the passage before us—' Implore blessings on the head of him who is imprecating evils on yours.' But in this case, the injunction would be quite synonymous with *pray* for them. To " bless," here, I apprehend, signifies to speak in a civil and friendly manner, so far as truth will permit, both to and of those individuals who speak to and of us in

¹ Matth. v. 44.

a very different way. It is, I think, quite parallel with the apostle's injunction, not to "render railing for railing, but contrariwise blessing." Be civil and kind to those who are rude to you, and be ready, when you can do so with truth, to speak to the advantage of those who have, by malignant and untrue statements, endeavoured to injure your reputation.

"Do good to them that hate you." Your benevolent regard to your enemies, is not to be confined to kind wishes and civil speeches: where you have an opportunity—and you ought readily to avail yourself of every opportunity that offers, you ought to seek such opportunities—you should be ready to do a good office to him who has proved his hatred of you by doing you an ill office.

"Pray for them who despitefully use you and persecute you." Knowing that you can do but little to make them happy, call in the aid of Omnipotence. Instead of imprecating vengeance, pray for forgiveness, and for all heavenly and spiritual blessings, to them; and do this for your most inveterate foes—"for them who despitefully use you and persecute you."

A most powerful motive to the discharge of these difficult duties is suggested by our Lord in the words that follow:—"That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."¹ These words may either mean, 'that you may clearly show that you are the children of God—that ye stand in a peculiar, close, and endearing relation to him, and that ye have been formed to a peculiar character in reference to him;' or 'that you may resemble God, as children resemble their parents.' I apprehend the last is our Lord's meaning. Cherish these sentiments, adopt this conduct, in reference to enemies, for it is in this way that you are to imitate him

¹ Matth. v. 45.

whom you, under the new dispensation, are enabled to call Father, with a peculiar emphasis. He is good to the unthankful and evil, he makes HIS ¹ sun to rise on the evil as well as on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. He is merciful even to those who resist his will, and rebel against his laws. They share the bounties of his providence. They are invited to participate in the blessings of his salvation. He has no pleasure in their death. He is not willing that any should perish. He is long-suffering towards them, that his goodness may lead them to repentance. Surely this must be felt by every Christian as a very powerful motive, especially when he considers what must have become of himself, what must have become of the whole race of man, had not God loved his enemies, and “commended his love to men, in that while they were enemies, he spared not his own Son, but gave him up, the just in the room of the unjust.” The man who hates his enemies is not like God—cannot be a child of God. A child of God! he is of his father the devil, and the works of his father he does. The more we love our enemies the more we resemble God, and the more evidence do we exhibit that we are really his children.

The whole of our Lord's exhortation goes on the principle that, from “the children of the kingdom,” it is reasonable to expect such a conformity to the character of their Father; and that if this is not manifested, they who profess to be children of the kingdom, disgrace at once their profession and themselves. “For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?”² ‘If your kind regards are confined to those who regard and treat you with kindness, you do no more than the worst and most despicable class of

¹ Beautifully does Bengel say,—“Magnifica appellatio. Ipse et fecit solem et gubernat, et habet in sua unius potestate.”

² Matth. v. 46, 47.

men are in the habit of doing. Wicked and unprincipled men readily express their gratitude to those who have befriended them. The most barbarous and savage nations generally return kindness for kindness. Even the brute creation show attachment to those who treat them well. Will you take credit to yourself for having acted like a Christian, when you have only acted not worse than a heathen, and not worse than a brute? If you would show that you are the children of God, you must love not only him whom the Scribes call your neighbour, but him also whom they call your enemy. You must "be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect."

These words are to be limited by the context,—your love is not to be partial, but universal, like that of your heavenly Father. You are to love not some only, but *all*, even those who seem the least suitable objects of benevolent regard. That this is the meaning, is plain from the parallel passage in Luke, "Be ye merciful, as your Father which is in heaven is merciful."¹ While I have no doubt this is the meaning of the words, it is an important truth, that the Divine moral excellence is the copy and rule of the Christian, and that nothing short of as complete a conformity to this, as the limited capacities of our nature admit of, should satisfy our ambition.²

To love enemies, is not natural to man; and the only effectual method of implanting such a disposition in the mind, is the shedding abroad in the heart the love of God and his Son.³ The man who really believes, that when he was an enemy of God, God so loved him as to give his Son to be the victim for his sins, cannot deliberately cherish resentment against any human being, but, constrained by God's love, he will become a follower of him as a dear child,

¹ "Perfecti in amore, erga omnes."—BENGEL.

² "Ipse secundum naturam suam, nos secundum nostram."—AUGUSTIN.

³ "A love such as this, man cannot appropriate to himself, through a resolution of will, or by means of endeavour, because this love is a divine love; he can only obtain it through a spiritual communication by faith."—OLSHAUSEN.

and reason in this way :—‘ If God for Christ’s sake, has forgiven me, surely I should forgive my brethren.’ There is something peculiarly touching in the manner in which the Apostle Paul enforces the duties here enjoined, in his Epistle to Titus. “ Speak evil of no man, be no brawlers, be gentle, showing all meekness unto all men. For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost ; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour ; that, being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying, and these things I will that thou affirm constantly, that they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable unto men.” ¹

§ 8. *The righteousness of Christians, and that of the Scribes and Pharisees, compared in reference to the duties of beneficence and piety.*

In the sixth chapter, our Lord prosecutes his illustration, by examples, of the principle stated at the twentieth verse of the preceding chapter, ‘ that the righteousness of the kingdom greatly exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and of the Pharisees ;’ that is, that the system of religious and moral duty, to be taught and exemplified under the new economy, was to be greatly superior to that taught by the Scribes, and exemplified by the Pharisees. The examples already brought forward, refer to that system as taught by the Scribes ; the examples which follow, refer to it as exemplified by the Pharisees.

¹ Tit. iii. 2-8.

"Take heed," says our Lord, "that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."¹ It is generally admitted, by the best critics, that the original reading of the passage before us is, "Take heed that ye do not your *righteousness*² before men to be seen of them," &c. This first verse is a statement of a general principle in reference to religious and moral duties, which, in the succeeding verses, is applied to the three particular duties of alms, prayer, and fasting.

To "do our righteousness" is just, in other words, to perform those duties which we owe to God and to man. Now, our Lord prohibits his disciples from imitating the conduct of the Pharisees in doing those duties before men to be seen of them. These words are not to be understood as a prohibition of the performance of religious and moral duty in the presence of other men, for many duties, both of religion and morality, are of a public nature, and, therefore, if performed at all, must be performed before men; but they are to be understood as a prohibition of giving an unnecessary publicity to our performances of duty, and especially, of our performing any duty in public in order to attract attention to ourselves, and secure applause for our conduct. There are cases in which we not only may perform, but ought to perform, certain duties publicly, and perform them with the wish and purpose that they may attract notice; we are to "provide things honest," that is, honourable, "in the sight of all men;"³ we are to "make our light shine before men, that they may see our good works."⁴ But while we do so we must have an ulterior object. If we do our good works before men that they may see them, the object must be, not that they may applaud us, but "that they may glorify our Father which is in heaven;" not that we may show off ourselves to advantage, but that we may adorn the doctrine of

¹ Matth. v. 16.² Rom. xii. 17.³ "δικαιοσύνη, instead of ἰσχυροσύνη,"—Vide THOLUCK.

God our Saviour in all things. The words of our Lord are equivalent to,—‘Beware of giving an unnecessary publicity to your performance of duty; and beware of making the approbation and applause of men your ultimate object in the performance of duty.’

This injunction is enforced by a very powerful motive:—“Otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven;” that is, ‘If you perform your duties merely in order to obtain the praise of men, you cannot obtain the approbation of God, or those manifestations of his approbation in which the reward of duty consists.’ This statement proceeds on a principle which pervades the whole of the system of duty enjoined by our Lord—that actions take their character from their principles—and that nothing is an act of duty to God but what springs from a regard to his authority, and from a desire of his approbation. A number of men perform the same external act—an act required by the Divine law—but they perform it from different principles. One does it merely because it is customary, and thus proves that he has the principle of imitation. The act with him is little better than a mere manifestation of instinct. Another does it to increase his influence or power,—in him it is a display of ambition. Another does it to advance his worldly interests,—in him it is a manifestation of “covetousness.” Another does it to acquire applause,—in him it is a display of vanity. Another does it to alleviate or remove the sufferings of his fellow-men,—in him it is a manifestation of humanity. Another does it, because he knows it to be the will of God, to which he is desirous of being in all things conformed,—and in him alone it is an act of religious duty.¹ He alone does what God requires, which is not only to do some external act, but to do that act from a regard to the will of God; and, of course, he only can obtain God’s approbation, and those manifesta-

¹ Brewster.

tions of God's approbation in which the reward of duty consists. For a man doing righteousness, doing what is in itself good, merely in order to obtain the approbation of men—for such a man to expect God's approbation, is in the highest degree unreasonable. He is not seeking it; and not seeking it, most assuredly he never will obtain it.

In our Lord's words there is involved, not only the principle, that acts in themselves good, if proceeding from unworthy motives, can not obtain the approbation of God, or the manifestation of that approbation which is the proper reward of duty, but also the converse principle, that acts in themselves good, if they proceed from right motives, must meet with the Divine approbation, and be rewarded by suitable manifestations of that approbation. Nothing we can do can merit reward; but it is the natural and necessary result of the infinite holiness and benignity of the Divine nature, that every act of real allegiance to him, every expression of love, esteem, veneration, and obedience, is regarded by him with complacency, and draws forth, in some form or other, a display of this complacency, in conferring a gracious reward.

Against the practice of performing duties from a vain-glorious principle, our Lord exhorts his disciples with peculiar urgency:—"Take heed," says he, "that ye do not your righteousness to be seen of men." Our Lord's emphatic language intimates, that what he warns them against is an evil of great magnitude, and an evil which they were in great hazard of incurring; an evil, to borrow the quaint language of Matthew Henry, that they were "in great danger *by*, and in great danger *of*." Making a regard for human approbation and applause, the great motive of our conduct, is utterly inconsistent with the very being of religion. It degrades the character, and ruins the soul. He who primarily seeks the praise of men, by doing so excludes himself from the praise of God; and he who finds the reward of his conduct in the applause of short-sighted and

misjudging men now, will find his punishment in the everlasting contempt of all truly wise intelligent beings for ever. As it is an evil of great magnitude, so it is one from which we are in great danger. The love of the approbation of our fellow-men is a principle natural to us, and, when kept within its proper bounds, it is a very useful and praiseworthy principle; but it is ever in danger of passing those limits, and usurping to itself supremacy, as a motive to action. It has been justly said, that "The love of human praise is a very subtle and deceitful desire. It imperceptibly creeps into the heart, and, ere we are aware, becomes the animating and regulating principle of conduct."¹

To prevent mistake, it may be proper to observe, that nothing which our Lord says here, is at all inconsistent with the doctrine of his apostle, who teaches us that "every one should please his neighbour for his good to edification."² We are to avoid offending those with whom we are connected; we are to seek to stand well in their estimation. We are to do so, however, not from the desire of their praise, but because God has commanded us so to act, and because, without being esteemed by them, it is not likely we shall have it in our power to be really useful to them. It is to be done less for our own sake than for theirs—not that we may have their approbation, but that we may promote their welfare. What our Lord condemns, is not the wishing to stand well in the estimation of our fellow-men, but the ostentatiously performing religious or moral duties for the purpose of securing their admiration or applause. In one word, the placing a regard to the opinion of man in the room of a regard to the will of God.³

¹ Brewster.

² Rom. xv. 2.

³ "The" excessive "love of men's admiration and applause is a most dangerous and pernicious principle. It leads to all the vanities and follies of this world, to fawning and flattery, to cunning and deceit, to envy and calumny, to ostentation and hypocrisy, to ambition and murder, to infidelity and irreligion. It fetters the faculties of the mind, and perverts the feelings of the heart. It sets conscience aside, makes the word of God of none effect, and gives to man another rule of life—the opinion of the world—an *uncertain* rule, always chang-

It may also not be without its use, to guard against an undue contempt of the opinion of man. There is a great tendency in the human mind to run into extremes. That man is in a serious error, who thinks he has attained true dignity of character, merely because he sets at defiance public opinion. In very many cases, he who does so, is in reality only courting public admiration, by pretending to despise it. He wishes the world to admire him as a person superior to its smiles or its frowns. The man who attends to the duties of life, from a regard to human opinion, may, to a certain degree, be a useful member of society. The man who is neither animated by the love of praise, nor restrained by the fear of contempt, if a stranger to higher and holier motives, is likely to be one of the most mischievous members of society.

Having laid down this general principle, that, unlike the Pharisees, his disciples should not allow a regard to the opinion, and a desire of the applause, of men, to be their leading motive in the discharge of religious and moral duties, our Lord proceeds to apply this general principle to particular uses. He applies it, in succession, to alms, to prayer, and to fasting.

(1.) *Alms.*

Our Lord applies the principle first to *alms* :—"Therefore, when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth ;

ing according to the fancies of men—an *insufficient* rule, leading him only to put on the appearance of righteousness—a *dangerous* rule, as likely to lead him to evil as to good—a *sinful* rule, substituting the will of man in the room of the will of God, and the individual's own honour in the room of God's glory—in fine, an *unchristian* rule, opposing the whole spirit and design of the Gospel ; filling the man with the thought of his excellencies rather than with the sense of his deficiencies ; flattering his pride instead of humbling his heart ; teaching him to live to himself rather than to his Maker and Redeemer."—Abridged from BREWSTER.

that thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.”¹

It is obvious that our Lord goes on the supposition, that his disciples would give alms. At this time our Lord's disciples were comparatively few, and the great body of them belonged to the labouring class, and yet he takes for granted that they would give alms. True religion always teaches men to be merciful; and it is the duty of all who have more than what is absolutely necessary for their own support, and that of their families, to give what they can spare to those who need. I do not think Christ Jesus would have acknowledged any person as a disciple who did not give alms, unless he was himself absolutely indigent.

Our Lord gives directions, both negatively and positively, as to the manner in which alms should be given. Let us look at his negative directions:—“When thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues, and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward.”

It has been supposed by interpreters, that in this passage there is a reference to a custom among the Jews, of which we have no particular record. It is well known that, among some of the ancient nations—the Romans, for example—it was a custom for the rich to distribute at their doors, at stated times, money and provisions among their poor dependants; and it has been supposed that this custom had been introduced among the Jews. It has also been supposed, that on such occasions a trumpet was sounded, professedly to assemble the poor, but really to give public notice that the rich were engaged in a work of generosity. This is, however, merely a conjecture,² though not an

¹ Matth. vi. 2-4.

² We may safely say so, since the learned, and laborious, and honest Light-foot has said—“Non inveni, quæsierim licet multum serioque, vel minimum *tubæ* vestigium in præstandis Eleemosynis: a doctioribus (where were these to be found?) libentissime hoc discerem.” Ikenius, another most learned man, makes the same acknowledgment.

improbable one. We have good evidence that, in oriental countries, mendicants often carry a trumpet along with them, which they sound on receiving alms, in honour of those who bestow them ; and it has been supposed that the Pharisees selected such mendicants as the objects of their alms, that their liberality might be duly celebrated.¹ It is quite possible, however, that the word may be merely a proverbial way of expressing the sentiment:—‘Make no unnecessarily ostentatious display of your liberality in alms-giving.’

Our Lord terms the persons who were in the habit of acting in this way, “hypocrites.”² There can be no doubt the reference is to the Pharisees, to whom he often gives this name. The word signifies stage-players—actors—persons who assume a character. The great body of the Pharisees seem to have been of this description. They assumed the appearance of great sanctity, while they were, in reality, the slaves of worldly and selfish passions. They, in doing their alms, made an ostentatious display in the synagogues and in the streets.

The word “synagogue” is usually, in Scripture, employed to signify the houses in which the Jews used to meet for instruction and devotion. The word, however, just means meetings. The English word meeting is often used in the south to signify a dissenting place of worship ; but still it is also often used without this particular reference ; and, in the same way, I apprehend, synagogues are to be understood generally of places of public concourse, as we have no reason to think that it was the custom among the Jews to give alms in *the* synagogue.³ These hypocritical Pharisees chose the most public situations for bestowing their alms—where there was to be found the greatest number of spectators and admirers.

¹ Harmer's Observations, vol. i.

² The state of Greek learning, previous to the age immediately before the Reformation, may be judged of from Lyra's account of the etymology of *ὑποκριτής*: “Dicitur,” says he, “ab *hypo* quod est *sub* et *crisis*, *aurum*, quia *sub auro*, vel *sub honestate exterioris* conversationis habet absconditum *plumbum falsitatis*.”

³ Wolfius and Kuinæl.

Their object in doing so was, "that they might have glory of men." In giving publicity to their alms, their object was, not that others might be led to imitate their example—and thus God might be glorified, and the poor relieved—but that they might secure for themselves a high place in public estimation, and thus be placed in more favourable circumstances for gaining their own interested objects.

Our Lord most emphatically adds—"Verily they have their reward." They obtain what they seek, and they shall obtain no more. The praise of men is their reward—all their reward. They have the admiration of men, and the disapprobation of God; and they are to the full rewarded. Indeed, their ostentatious and selfish ends rendered them even unworthy of the praise of men. They have obtained more than they deserve, and it would be unreasonable in them to expect any farther recompense.

Our Lord now proceeds to give positive directions as to the manner in which alms should be given. "When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."¹

It is an ingenious remark, that there is probably here an allusion to the fact that the chest for receiving alms was placed at the right hand entrance into the synagogue, so that, in passing it, the right hand was employed in putting into it contributions for the poor.² Whether there be a reference to this custom or not, the meaning of the words is plain:—"Let your alms-giving be as private as possible—let not those at your left hand know what you are giving in charity with your right—let not even your nearest relatives, who are most at your hand, be told of your works of mercy, unless there be some good reason for their knowing them—or endeavour to conceal them even from yourself. Do not

¹ Matth. vi. 3.

² Henry.



dwelling on them in your mind as a source of self-complacent reflection.’¹

The first clause of the fourth verse should be read in connection with the third, thus: “Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth, that thine alms may be in secret.” Use every proper method to avoid ostentation in giving alms. In this case, the praise of men cannot be expected; but if the alms be bestowed from a regard to the Divine authority, as one of God’s appointed methods for promoting the happiness of his children and our brethren, we shall obtain a much richer reward. Our Father,² who seeth in secret, is the witness of our alms; he sees what we do, and he sees the principle from which we do it. He approves of our conduct, and he shall manifest his approbation of our conduct. That manifestation of his approbation shall be public. He will reward you openly.

The best illustration of this is to be found in Matthew xxv. “When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory.” “And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” “And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.”³

Our best works deserve no recompense at his hands. If we think of them as we ought, we shall see so much wanting and so much wrong, that we will not presume to think

¹ The exposition of Luther is original. According to him, such a giving by the right hand is meant—as that the left, knowing nothing of the matter, cannot stretch itself out, in order, by the reception of the honour, to make up the loss. “That is called *givers havers*, as children joke with each other.”—THOLUCK. TRENCH very happily gives the meaning—“Let your alms be given so secretly, that, if that were possible, no part of yourselves, save that actually engaged in the giving, should know of the gift—not even the brother hand.”—Exposition of the Sermon on the Mount, p. 86.

² “Numero singulari *Pater meus* dicere unigeniti proprium est: *Pater tuus* dicitur ad fideles; *pater* vel *pater noster* a fidelibus dicitur. Conf. John xx. 17.”—BENGEL.

³ Matth. xxv. 31, 40, 46.

them worthy of his notice. Yet he will notice the least and the most secret of all ; he will openly approve them ; he will abundantly reward them. God is not unrighteous to forget the work, and labour, and love, which they show to his name.¹ But it must be the work and labour of love, and it must be showed to his name. It deserves notice, that, in the Divine administration, it is so ordered that the selfish person is disappointed in the end, while he who seeks the good of others shall find his own ; no works of man can deserve reward from God. If any man think, by a series of beneficent actions, to atone for his sins, and purchase heaven, he shall find himself awfully disappointed. But every manifestation of love to God, and love to men for God's sake, is an object of the Divine approbation, and that approbation shall be suitably displayed.

In this passage, as in a number of others in this discourse, we must beware of an over literal interpretation. In condemning public almsgiving—or rather in condemning those who give all their alms in public—it is not so much the act as the principle which our Lord condemns. Were we understanding the words in all the extent of meaning which they will bear—it would follow, that nothing ought to be given in public subscriptions or collections for the poor—for in this, concealment would be improper, if not impossible. It is obvious from Acts xv. 29, 30, that the primitive Christians did not always conceal their donations. To do so in every case would be inconsistent with the command. Indeed, it is quite possible, that secrecy may be a cloak to avarice, and it is a fact that many by pretending to be very private in their charities, have contrived to keep their money to themselves, and at a very cheap rate obtain the reputation of remarkable generosity.² Yet, on the other hand, the remarks of the judicious Scott deserve to be seriously pondered, though “there are many charities which can scarcely be

¹ Heb. vi. 10.

² Fuller.

promoted without some degree of public notoriety, and frequently a leading person may be called to excite others, who are backward, by a useful example, yet no duty is more liable to be made an occasion of vain-glory than this, and many designs very praiseworthy in themselves, and beneficial to others, are supported by a liberality which springs almost entirely from this corrupt principle. The heart is deceitful, and when men love to have their names among the subscribers to public charity, but are not equally liberal in private, while they love to speak and hear of their own beneficence, and are not willing to do much without the credit of it, it is too plain how the case stands with them. In general, private charities, if not most useful, are most unequivocal, and the less reward we receive from man, the more may we expect from our gracious God."

(2.) *Prayer.*

We proceed now to the application of the general principle laid down in the first verse, to the duty of prayer. The sum of what he says in the preceding verses is—'My disciples, the children of the kingdom, are to give alms, but they are not to give them as the Pharisees do: their righteousness is in this point to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees.' And the sum of what he says in the words now before us—'My disciples, the children of the kingdom, are to pray, but they are not to pray as the Pharisees: in this point also, their righteousness is to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees.' How it is to do so will appear more distinctly, when we have examined somewhat more minutely our Lord's statements.

1. *General directions about Prayer.*

"And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." ¹

¹ Matth. vi. 5.

There are two preliminary remarks, to which I would call attention, before entering on the explication of these words. The first is, that our Lord does not here condemn public worship or social prayer.¹ It is plain, both from reason and Scripture, that both of these are duties, and from their very nature they cannot be performed in secret. They must be performed before men, though our object in performing them must not be, that we may be seen of men. The reference plainly is to personal individual prayer.

The second preliminary remark is, that our Lord takes for granted, that all his disciples would be distinguished by the performance of secret prayer. What he says is not to persuade men to prayer, but to direct them in it. "Infidels may imagine that God does not concern himself with the affairs of mortals, and may excuse themselves by pretending that it would be presumption in them to solicit the supreme Being to do this or that. Formalists may say their prayers, and be glad when the task is over, but Christians cannot live without communion with God—as soon as Saul is converted, turned from a Pharisee into a Christian—'Behold he prayeth.'"² He formerly "said prayers" in public, now he prays in good earnest in secret. Prayer has with much propriety been called the breath of the new creature; and it has justly been said, you will as soon find a living man who does not breathe, as a living Christian who does not pray. "Every one that is godly," says David, "will pray to thee."

Taking it for granted, then, that our Lord's object is to show how, in the performance of the duty of secret prayer, his disciples were to exceed the Pharisees, the disciples of the Scribes, let us see in what this superiority was to

¹ That learned and honest, but very unsound-minded man, Gilbert Wakefield, maintained that there was no divinely appointed or sanctioned christian public worship. He was satisfactorily replied to by Dr Priestley and Mrs Barbauld, of his own denomination, as well as by others of a more orthodox creed.

² Fuller.

consist:—"When they prayed, they were not to be as the hypocrites;" that is, the Pharisees who were hypocrites, men who assumed a character which did not belong to them, who pretended to be very religious, when in truth, in the just acceptation of the word, they were not religious at all. Hypocrisy characterised the general conduct of the Pharisees; but in nothing was it more disgustingly exhibited than in the manner in which they performed the duty of individual personal prayer. They "loved to pray standing¹ in the synagogues,"—that is, I apprehend, not the place of public worship, but any place of public concourse—and "in the corners of the streets,"²—at the crossing of the streets, where there generally is a crowd, and where they could be seen from all quarters. These were the places and circumstances in which the hypocritical Pharisees loved to perform their personal devotions.

This seems very strange to us, but it quite accords with what is still customary in oriental countries, especially among the Mohammedans. There are stated times for prayer, and whenever these times arrive, the more devout—wherever they are, in whatever company, and in whatever employment they are engaged—immediately perform their devotions.³ A similar custom prevails in Spain, not improbably borrowed from the Moors.

We know that among the Jews there were appointed hours for prayer, the third hour, or nine o'clock; the sixth hour, or mid-day; and the ninth hour, or three in the afternoon.⁴ How this appointment originated we do not know. We find David saying, "Evening, morning, and at noon, will I pray;" and we find Daniel praying three times a-day, probably at these seasons. Now it would appear that it was a common thing for the hypocritical Pharisees, instead of retiring at these seasons for devotion, rather to arrange

¹ The usual attitude of the Jews in prayer, as also of the ancient Christians, was standing. Maimon. *constit. de precat.*—THOLUCK. 1 Kings viii. 44. Dan. vi. 10. In the Greek church also, "standing" is the prayer posture.

² Matth. vi. 6. Prov. viii. 2, 3. ³ Brewster. ⁴ Prideaux, *Connect.* vol. i.

matters, so as that they might be found in a very public situation when these times came ; and there, in the presence of an admiring multitude, with all the external appearances of remarkable devotion, they said their prayers. Their object was not that they might be heard by God, but “seen of men.” The act of personal prayer, in itself a dutiful one, was in their case, not so much an act of worship of God, as of worship partly of themselves, and partly of those whose applause they coveted.

Here, as in the case of alms, our Lord warns his disciples, not so much against the external act, as against the principle which it implies. They mistake his meaning who think that he here prohibits the posture of standing in prayer, or prohibits in every case the performance of personal devotion in public. A Christian may be placed in circumstances in which he cannot retire for secret prayer, but he is not therefore to neglect it, nor is he studiously to conceal from his companions that he performs it. Paul “gave thanks to God in the presence of the ship’s company,”¹ when probably there was not another Christian to make the exercise social devotion ; nay, Christians may be placed in circumstances in which it is their duty to make it known, that they regularly attend to the duties of personal devotion. Daniel is not to be blamed because he opened his window when “he kneeled on his knees, and prayed to God in his house,”² as a testimony against the impious decree, forbidding all prayer for a month.

That which Christ means to censure was the loving to pray in public places “to be seen of men.” “His object was not to appoint *the place*, or the *posture* of prayer. These, in his estimation, were matters of very inferior moment ; but to detect the vanity of the mind ; to direct his followers to seek, not the applause of men, but the approbation of God.”³ The person who loves to officiate in social worship, because he

¹ Acts xxvii. 35.² Dan. vi. 10.³ Fuller.

may thus obtain for himself a character for remarkable piety among his brethren, is equally condemned by the spirit of our Lord's prohibition, as the Pharisee who performed his private devotion in public for the same purpose.

In reference to such persons our Lord solemnly declares, "Verily, I say unto you, they have their reward." The word "reward," is of ambiguous meaning, nearly equivalent to recompense. It seems to have been our Lord's intention to intimate, that these men's conduct would be followed by its natural consequences, both from men and from God, in time and in eternity. They obtain man's applause, and God's disapprobation, because, for a pretence, they make public and long prayers; they are honoured by men who look on the outward appearance, and from him who looketh on the heart they receive "greater damnation."

The man who can designedly make the solemnities of religion the instrument of gratifying his own vanity and ambition and covetousness, may obtain what he does not deserve, and what he would not receive if the truth were known, the admiration of men; but he richly deserves, and he will certainly receive, if repentance do not intervene, his part among the hypocrites, where there is "everlasting shame and contempt," as well as "weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth."¹

Instead of seeking the greatest possible publicity for our personal devotions, we should seek the greatest attainable privacy. "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet; and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."²

Some have considered the words of our Lord in the beginning of the verse as figurative.³ To enter into the closet, and to shut the door before prayer, is considered as a meta-

¹ "How foolish, how wretched a thing to speak to God, and to look to men."
—LEIGHTON. "Pray to the gods, but would have mortals hear."—YOUNG.

² Matth. vi. 6.

³ Augustine.

phorical expression for withdrawing the mind from all external objects, shutting out all but God and ourselves, remembering that in prayer it is with *Him*, with *Him* alone, that we have to do. This is an important truth, and is equally applicable to social as to personal prayer. But it seems quite obvious, from entering into the closet, and shutting the door, being contrasted with standing in places of public concourse, that the words are to be understood literally, "When thou prayest," 'when, as an individual, thou art about to present personal addresses and private petitions before the throne of God, instead of going into a crowd that men may observe thee, withdraw, whenever it is practicable, from all human society.'

"Enter into thy closet," 'retire by thyself.' We are not to dwell on the word *closet*.¹ A field, a garden, a mountain, may be as retired as a closet, and have all been sanctified by the Saviour's example, as proper scenes for secret prayer.² "And when thou hast shut thy door," that is, 'when thou hast secluded thyself from observation, and secured thyself from interruption, then perform thy personal devotions.'

"Pray to thy Father in secret." There are none of your fellow-men there, but He with whom you have to do is there. Lay open to him your minds and your hearts, your wants and your wishes, your fears and your sorrows. "Worship him who is a Spirit, in spirit and in truth." Such prayers will not secure you human applause, but they will draw down on you the approbation of your heavenly Father, and such testimonies of his approbation as will be an exceeding great reward.

"Thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly." Secret prayer does not, cannot, in the proper sense of the term, merit anything, but it is, it must be, the object of the approbation of him who desireth truth in the

¹ Ταμειον = ὑπερῷον—the upper part of the house, to which the pious Jews used to retire for devotional purposes. Acts x. 9.

² Scott.

inward parts. Even now, he richly rewards the sincere secret worshipper, by "manifesting himself to him in a way he does not to the world;" and ultimately these secret intercourses with God shall be openly declared before men and angels, as evidences of humility, and faith, and unfeigned piety; and in uninterrupted intimate fellowship with God, throughout eternity, shall obtain an abundant, gracious, recompense.

The prayers of our Lord's disciples were to be contradistinguished from those of the Pharisees, both by their originating in a desire, not for human applause, but for God's approbation, leading them to the greatest practicable privacy, instead of the greatest possible publicity, and also by being more rational in their substance and form. The Pharisees acted as if they thought, that the merely repeating over and over again the same words, and protracting the service to a sufficient length, would secure the acceptance of their prayers.

Against the foolish and superstitious usage originating in this mistake, our Lord warns his disciples: "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions,¹ as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."²

It is plain that our Lord does not mean to forbid either the repetition of the same request again and again in the same prayer, or the continuing for a considerable time in devotional exercises. In Daniel's prayer for the restoration of the Jews, the same words, or words of the same import, are frequently repeated. In the hundred and nineteenth Psalm, the petition, "teach me thy statutes," recurs seven times. In the hundred and thirty-sixth Psalm, the words, "his mercy endureth for ever," is repeated twenty-six times. On a most interesting occasion, when the fervour

¹ There can be no doubt this is a fair translation of the original word *Barrologion*, the origin of which has given so much exercise to the learning and ingenuity of critics. "Quantum sufficit," on this subject, may be found in THOLUCK, v. ii. p. 114-123.

² Matth. vi. 7.

of his devotion was certainly as great as human nature is susceptible of, our Lord three times presented the same petition, in the same words.¹ When a person is very deeply impressed with the sense of the value of a blessing, and of his need of it, it would be a most painful constraint to be prevented from expressing it again and again.²

As we cannot consider our Lord's words as a prohibition of all repetitions in prayer, neither can we consider them as an unqualified condemnation of long prayers. The prayers of Solomon, Nehemiah, and Daniel, although uttered under the inspiring influence of the Holy Spirit, are of considerable length; and we know that our Lord himself, on one occasion, continued all night in prayer to God.³ It is plain, too, from the number of persons whom Paul remembered in his prayers, that his devotions could not be very short.

Our Lord himself teaches us what are the limitations with which we are to understand his words. His disciples are "not to use such repetitions as the heathen," and as "the hypocrites,"⁴ the Pharisees, did: they were not to protract their prayers as the heathen and the hypocrites—the Pharisees—prolonged theirs. The repetitions referred to are such as those of the priests of Baal, who cried from the morning till the evening, "O Baal, hear us!"⁵ such as the Ephesian mob uttered, when, for the space of two hours, they cried out, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians."⁶ Such repetitions and long-continued prayers proceeded, on the part of the poor heathens, from an idea that they would be

¹ Brewster.

² It is reported of Augustine that he prayed over, for a whole night, "Noverim te, Domine, noverim me." "There is no prayer," says Leighton, "too long to God, provided it be all enlivened with affection; no idle repetition where the heart says every word over again as often and more often than the tongue."

³ "He who himself spent nights in prayer, and spake a parable that men ought always to pray, and not to faint, does not find fault with prayer which is long drawn out, if only it be prayer."—TRENCH.

⁴ "In omnibus rebus vitandus mos hypocritarum; in precibus etiam ethnicorum."—BENGEL.

⁵ 2 Kings xviii. 26.

⁶ Acts xix. 28.

heard for their much speaking. Their notions of their divinities were very low. They thought that they were very nearly such as themselves. Such notions and such practices still exist. The Indian devotees spend whole days in shouting out the sacred monosyllable, *Um* ; and the Mohammedan dervises turn round in a circle, repeating *He*, or *Alla*, till they drop down from giddiness.¹

The Jews, who ought to have been better informed, seem to have adopted similar absurd notions and practices. The following are maxims of the Talmudical doctors :—" Every one who multiplies prayers shall be heard ;" and, " the prayer that is long shall not return empty." The Pharisees made long prayers, and this was considered as a proof of their uncommon devotion.

It is curious to observe the identity of the character of false religion in all its forms—Heathenism, corrupted Judaism, and corrupted Christianity. The poor deluded Romanists are in the habit of repeating the Lord's prayer, and the salutations of the Virgin, in a language they do not understand ; and of expecting that, by the frequent repetition of these, which they number by counting a string of beads, they are to obtain deliverance from the greatest evils, and the possession of the most important blessings.² In a popish psalter, addressed to Jesus, the word *Jesu* is repeated fifteen times, with only the words, " Have mercy on us, and help us ;" and ending thus, " Give me here my purgatory !"

In opposition to these false notions, our Lord instructs us that words are not essential to true devotion, and that prayers must not necessarily be long, in order to their being effectual :—" Be not ye therefore like unto them : for your

¹ " Ohe ! jam desine Deos, uxor, gratulando obtundere,
Tuam esse inventam gnatam : nisi illos ex tuo ingenio judicas,
Ut nihil credas intelligere, nisi idem dictum sit centies."

TERENT.

² For full accounts of the "battology" of the Roman Church, consult Voetii Disput. æl. Theol. tom. iii.

Father knoweth what things ye have need of before ye ask Him.”¹ Our Lord forbids here, all unmeaning and unnecessary repetitions. When repetition is the natural result of earnest desire, it is more than allowable; but when it is the effect of carelessness or ostentation, or when it proceeds from the idea that the merely repeating certain words is to produce some beneficial effect, it is sinful and forbidden. A prayer is not by any means necessarily a bad one because it is long, any more than it is necessarily a good one because it is short. In general, it is proper to avoid long prayers, especially in the family and in the church, which are not only wearisome to men, but offensive to God. A proper sense of the majesty of the Supreme Being would cure this evil. “God is in heaven, and thou upon earth; therefore let thy words be few.”² It is worthy of observation, that whenever our Lord or his apostles were long in prayer, it was in private. It has been shrewdly remarked, that “if many, who pray for an hour or longer in public, and with tedious repetitions, were as circuitous in the closet, whether we should commend their discretion or not, we might hope well of their sincerity. But when the reverse is true, it certainly has the appearance, to speak it gently, of the very spirit which it was our Saviour’s intention to condemn.”³

The reason which our Lord assigns for his disciples avoiding the needless repetitions and the tiresome protraction by which the prayers of the heathens and Pharisees were characterised, is a very satisfactory one:—“Your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask Him.” So far from many words being necessary, strictly speaking, no words at all are necessary to prayer. To most of us I believe, even in secret prayer, the employment of words is useful, and in social prayer, it is absolutely necessary; but it is not needful in reference to God. He needs not to be in-

¹ Matth. vi. 8.

² Eccles. v. 2.

³ Fuller.

formed by words what we want, nor urged by words to afford us the requisite supply. He is not ignorant of our necessities, nor indisposed to supply these "according to his glorious riches."¹

But it may be asked, if such be the truth, what is the use of prayer? Is it not altogether unnecessary? To this question I reply, in the well-considered language of a most useful practical expositor of the sermon on the Mount. "Prayer is necessary by the Divine appointment. We are expressly commanded to ask, that we may receive. If we refuse to seek the Divine bounties, as he has ordained, we have no reason to expect, that he will bestow them upon us. Prayer is also, in its own nature, necessary before we can experience the blessing of the Almighty. It is intimately connected with the first principles of true religion. It is impossible to cherish these in the heart, without the soul rising in adoration of the Divine excellencies, and feeling a desire of the Divine favour; and what is this but prayer, in its simplest and purest form? It is likewise a becoming act of worship on our part, an acknowledgment of our dependence on God, and an expression of our obligations for his goodness. It is a useful means of disposing us rightly to receive and improve the gifts of Heaven, and is thus a kind of indispensable preparation before we can receive them. It is itself the exercise of our best feelings, and by the very act of prayer aright, we are made to possess many of the blessings which we ask. It is, in fine, naturally connected with the use of means for attaining what we seek in our petitions, and should thus dispose us to employ these means with renewed diligence. But though prayer is thus necessary and useful to us, it is not in the

¹ "*Superstition* ascribes the reason for the granting of a prayer, not to the mercy of God, but to its own godless work. *Unbelief* infers from the omniscience of God (in which it does not believe) the uselessness of prayer. *Faith* founds upon this same holy, gracious, divine omniscience, its poor prayer. Thus our Lord teaches us to pray in faith, *because* God knows, before we ask him, what things we stand in need of; and, therefore, he can inspire the (to him) acceptable prayer, and grant it accordingly."—OLSHAUSEN. Rom. viii. 26-28.

smallest degree necessary for informing or persuading the Almighty.”¹

2. *Pattern of Prayer.*

To place in a still clearer point of view, the kind of prayer by which his disciples were to be characterised, and contra-distinguished from the Pharisees, our Lord gives us a specimen of it in that wonderful composition commonly termed the Lord's Prayer, a composition of which it has been justly said, that it probably contains in it more important instruction than can any where else be found in so few words.

“After this manner pray ye,” that is, ‘Instead of the vain repetitions and the tedious protraction which are the leading characters of the prayers of these hypocrites, the Pharisees, let your prayers be distinguished for the simplicity, comprehensiveness, rationality, and brevity, which are the distinctive qualities of the following form.’

It has been a question, among interpreters and divines, which has given origin to a good deal of acrimonious controversy, whether the Lord's Prayer is to be considered as a form to be used, or as a pattern to be imitated. The right answer to the question is, it is to be considered as both. In the case before us, it seems plainly brought forward as an example or pattern of the prayer which was to prevail under the new economy. In the gospel by Luke, we find our Lord, on another occasion, as we apprehend, using, in reference to the same formula, these words :—“When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven,”² words which seem obviously to intimate, that it is the duty of his disciples in their prayers, not only always to use it as a pattern, but sometimes also to employ it as a form.

It has been very well remarked, that “it may be often very

¹ Brewster.—“Utrumque tenendum est, vota nostra Deo sponte praeveniri, et tamen nos precibus impetrare quod petimus.”—BENGEL. It does not require a very deep philosophy to see the consistency of these two equally certain principles. Some wise men of this world cannot, however, discern it.

² Luke xi. 2.

proper to use the very words, but it is not always necessary ; but we ought always to pray after the manner of it, with that reverence, humility, confidence in God, zeal for his glory, love to mankind—submission and moderation in temporal, and earnestness about spiritual, things, which it inculcates—avoiding vain repetitions, and using grave and comprehensive expressions.”¹

Let us now proceed to examine this divine pattern and form of prayer. As it stands before us, it consists of three parts—Invocation, Petition, and Doxology.*

The invocatory part of the prayer consists in these most comprehensive words—“Our Father which art in heaven.”² “Father,” like every other word properly expressive of human relation, when applied to the Divine Being, must be considered as bearing a figurative or analogical meaning. When God is represented as the Father of those who worship him, we are taught that he stands in a relation towards them similar to that in which a father stands to his children ; and that he regards them, and acts towards them, in a manner similar to that in which a father regards and acts towards his children.

It has sometimes been made a question, on the resolution of which the true meaning of the appellation “father” in the passage before us depends, whether this prayer is intended for all men, as the rational creatures of God ; or only for those who are become “the children of God through faith in Christ Jesus.” I apprehend it is the duty of every man to pray to God ; but it is the duty of every man to pray to God in his true character ; and it is only when one does so, that he can pray acceptably. God is the kind Father of all mankind, not only as he is the Father of the spirits of all flesh, who “hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,” and who “giveth to all life, and breath, and all

¹ Scott. *Vide* Vernede iii., Ser. xxii.

² Matth. vi. 9.

* See Note E.

things,"¹ but also, inasmuch as, though they have acted the part of most undutiful children, and exposed themselves to the most dreadful evils from him as the righteous Governor of the world, he still regards them with pity and love, he has no pleasure in their death—wills them to turn from their evil ways and live—and having, by a wondrous device of infinite wisdom, made the exercise of his compassion towards them perfectly compatible with the demands of holiness and justice, exhibits himself as "God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them," seeing he has "made him to be sin for" them "who knew no sin;" that "they might be made the righteousness of God in him:"² and proclaims, "Return to me ye backsliding children, for I have redeemed you;"³ for the "great love wherewith he loveth" men, through the mediation of his Son, blessing them with all heavenly and spiritual blessings, saving them in him, with an everlasting salvation.⁴ This is the truth as to the relation in which God stands to *men*; this is the way in which he regards them, and is disposed to treat them. Every man who hears the Gospel, may, should, believe these truths, and whatever has been his previous character, from that time, he may, he should, he will, call God his father. He will "set to his seal that God is true," and in his own experience, he will obtain satisfactory evidence, that, "as a father loveth and pitieth his children," so God loves and pities him.⁵ Our Lord could not do—whatever some of his mistaken servants may have done—he could never instruct any man to pray in *unbelief*; but he does here instruct all men to pray in faith.⁶ Every man—the greatest sinner breathing—may, ought, to call God father; but he never will really call God father, till he believe the truth about him; and then he will not be able to refrain from calling him father.

"Father," is just equivalent to 'the Being from whom

¹ Acts xvii. 25, 26.

² 2 Cor. v. 19-21.

³ Jer. iii. 14, 22.

⁴ Eph. ii. 4; i. 3.

⁵ John iii. 33. Psal. ciii. 13, 14.

⁶ Fuller.

we have derived existence and every blessing—on whom we are entirely dependent—who really loves us, and is disposed to bestow on us everything which is necessary to our true happiness, in the widest extent of meaning which belongs to that comprehensive word.’

“Father in heaven,” or “heavenly Father,” is an appellation intended to bring before our mind, that He who stands in so intimate a relation to us, and who regards and treats us so benignantly, is infinitely exalted above us. He is high above us, as the heaven is high above the earth. He is at the head of the universe—the great Sovereign whose throne is in the heavens, the region of immutable purity and happiness.

“Our Father,” or “our heavenly Father,” suggests the thought—‘He is not only the Father of other intelligent beings, but he is my Father; he regards me with pity—he desires my happiness—and he is not only my Father, but the Father of all my brethren in Christ, the Father of all my brethren of mankind.’

The important practical instruction suggested by this solemn invocation, is obviously this,—That, believing the truth respecting the infinite grandeur, and excellence, and amiableness of the Divine Being—believing that he stands to us in the relation of a father, and cherishes towards us the dispositions of a father—we should approach him with a mingled sentiment of veneration and love, awe, and confidence, in the full assured belief, that he is both able and willing to answer the prayers we present to him, agreeably to his will; and that it is our duty, when God gives us opportunity, to pray *with* others, and at all times to pray *for* others.¹ This invocation forms, as it were, the preface to the prayer.

The petitionary part of the prayer divides itself into six

¹ “Every believer hath a share in all the prayers of all the rest; he is a partner in every ship of that kind that goes to sea, and hath a portion of all their gainful voyages.”—LEIGHTON.

parts.¹ There are six different petitions or requests ; the first three of which have a direct reference to the Divine glory, and the last three to the petitioner's happiness.

The first petition is, "Hallowed be thy name."² The "name of God," as our heavenly Father, is God himself, as manifested in his works, and in his word, especially in this character of "our Father." The word "hallowed," is nearly synonymous with 'sanctified,' or 'glorified.' The petition is equivalent to, 'May the manifestation of thine infinitely-venerable and amiable excellencies, excite universal attention, and call forth corresponding sentiments and conduct, in all intelligent beings. May God, as our Father in heaven, be universally known and honoured. May we be enabled to "sanctify thee in our hearts, and to make thee our fear and our dread;" may we be enabled to "love thee with all our heart, and soul, and strength, and mind;" may we be enabled to "trust in thee at all times," to seek and to find happiness in thee, and in thee alone; may we be enabled to "glorify thee in our souls, and in our bodies, which are thine;"³ to think, feel, speak, and act, in every case, in a manner becoming thine infinite excellence, and the relation in which we stand to thee; and may this be the case, not only with us, as individuals, but with all the children of men. May they all know and fear, and love, and trust in and obey thee, as their heavenly Father.'

It is thus a most extensive petition. It is a prayer that all atheism, and infidelity, and ignorance, and error, and superstition, and false religion, and impiety, may be banished from the world, and that the only living and true God, "our Father in heaven," may be worshipped and honoured all over the earth, and by every individual of the human race.

¹ Divines of the Lutheran church generally consider the petitions as seven—dividing what we call the sixth into two.

² Matth. vi. 9. ³ Isa. viii. 13. Matth. xxii. 37. Psal. lxii. 8. 1 Cor. vi. 20.

The second position is, "Thy kingdom come."¹ Some, by "the kingdom of God," understand here the new economy, both in its external and internal administration; that is, the introduction, and progress, and universal establishment of true religion in its most perfect form—Christianity. Others think that "the kingdom" of the Father is to be considered as contrasted with the kingdom of the Son, and that the reference is to that final economy, when, "the end being come, the Son shall have delivered up the kingdom to the Father," and "God shall be all in all."² I am disposed to think the first view the correct one. The kingdom of God, and the kingdom of heaven, ordinarily signify the new economy; and the phrase, "The delivering up the kingdom to the Father," seems to me not to refer to the Mediator resigning his kingdom, but to his restoring, or bringing back, to the Father the kingdom which had revolted from him, and which revolt the mediation of the Son is intended to quell and put down.

"Thy kingdom come," is a prayer that we ourselves may be made loyal subjects to God, through the instrumentality of the word and agency of the Spirit of Christ—that we may be made thoroughly loving, faithful, obedient—that this may be the case with all with whom we are connected, by whatever tie—that the word of the kingdom may be preached in all nations—that it may be "preached with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven"—that christian churches may be established in every region of our earth—that "men may be blessed" in Christ Jesus, and that "all nations may call him blessed"—that "the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ"—that every opposing power may be put down, and God be all in all.

The terms of this petition have given rise to the opinion, that this prayer is only suited to the commencement of the christian dispensation: and that as the kingdom, which was then at hand,

¹ Matth. vi. 10.

² 1 Cor. xv. 24-28.

has long ago come ; it is absurd to pray for what has already taken place. But the coming of the kingdom, is a phrase which as naturally refers to the progress as to the introduction of the christian religion ; and, till that religion is universally known in our world—till its doctrines are universally taught in their primitive purity—till its ordinances are universally observed in their primitive simplicity—till all men are made to experience, in the highest possible degree, its power to sanctify and to bless—the prayer can never be an unseasonable one. ‘ May the kingdom of our Father in heaven come ; may his supreme authority be universally acknowledged ; and may all unite in ascribing the majesty to him of whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things ! ’

I apprehend, however, that those interpreters unduly confine the meaning of this petition, who would exclude the full development of the kingdom of God in the celestial state. To avail ourselves of the division of the Shorter Catechism, it refers not only to the advancement of “ the kingdom of grace,” but to the “ hastening of the kingdom of glory.”¹

The last petition, in the first division of the prayer, is, “ Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”² “ The will of God ” is a phrase which, taken by itself, may express either that which God has determined to do, or that which God has commanded to be done, and appointed to be submitted to. With regard to the will of God, in the first sense, it is already done on earth, as it is done in heaven. “ His counsel stands, and he does all his pleasure.” Neither infernal, nor human power or policy, can frustrate the pur-

¹ The following collection of scriptures, taken from Chemnitz, will enable the Christian, in his private devotions, to expand in his thoughts the petition, “ Thy kingdom come : ”—Luke xi. 20. Rom. xiv. 17. Psal. cx. 2. Rom. xvi. 20. John xvii. 15. 1 John v. 4. John xvi. 33. Matth. vi. 33 ; viii. 11 ; xviii. 6. Luke xvii. 33 ; xxiii. 42. Eph. ii. 19. Col. i. 12. Matth. xxv. 34. 1 Cor. xv. 50, &c. 2 Tim. iv. 18. 2 Pet. iii. 12. 2 Thess. i. 5. 1 Thess. ii. 13. 2 Pet. i. 11. Luke xii. 40.

² Matth. vi. 10.

poses of God. It is our duty to acquiesce in the Divine determinations, as infinitely wise and righteous, and to rejoice that "he worketh all things according to the counsel of his will:" but the doing of the will of God, in this sense, is not so properly a thing to be prayed for, as a thing to be acquiesced, to be rejoiced, in; at any rate, for the reason already assigned, that it is already done on earth, as it is in heaven, it cannot be the subject of the petition now under consideration.

It is not God's will of purpose, but God's will of precept and of providence, that is here referred to.¹ It is a prayer that our will, and the will of every human being, may be brought into a complete accordance with the will of God, as made known in his written word, or in his providential dispensations, that we, and all men, may desire and do as he wills and directs, that we may be made to know his will, to do his will, to submit to his will—to believe what he has revealed, because he has revealed it—to choose, and do what he has commanded, because he has commanded it—to submit to what he appoints, because he has appointed it. We do the will of God when, from a regard to his authority, we regulate our hearts and lives according to his law, and when, from the same principle, we acquiesce in the arrangements of his providence, resting satisfied with the manner in which he disposes of our concerns, and submitting, without doubting and murmuring, to all his dispensations. We not only pray that God's will may thus be done by ourselves and others on earth, but that it may be done "as it is done in heaven;" that is, by the angels, and the spirits of the just made perfect, universally, cheerfully, harmoniously. We pray, in other words, that we may, and others may, be made "perfect in all the will of God."

To be so is our duty, and ought to be at once our desire

¹ Beza considers the reference here as to the "*voluntas decernens*" rather than to the "*voluntas jubens*." His venerable and sounder-minded, though not more acute, friend, Calvin, is of an opposite opinion.

and endeavour. The knowledge of the fact, that in this life we never shall do the will of God in the same absolutely perfect way as it is done in heaven, is no reason why we should lower the object of our desires, or the aim of our endeavours. What an amount of blessing is wrapped up in this petition ! Were this petition fully granted, earth would almost become heaven ; for what makes heaven what it is, but that there the will of God is the will of all intelligent beings ? Perfect holiness, and perfect happiness, are necessarily implied in perfect conformity to the will of God.

These three petitions are most intimately connected. The great object of desire is the glory of God—"the hallowing his name." The grand means for securing this is "the coming of his kingdom;" and the manifestation that his kingdom is come, and his name therefore hallowed, is "the doing of his will on earth, as it is done in heaven."

The first of the petitions which have for their direct object human happiness, is, "Give us this day our daily bread."¹

Interpreters have found much difficulty in fixing the precise meaning of the epithet rendered in our version "daily."² The reason of this difficulty is, that the word no where else occurs in the New Testament, and is not to be found in any of the profane Greek writers, so that we have no means of ascertaining its true sense, save the connection and the etymology. I apprehend that the most probable meaning is, 'bread that is necessary and suitable to our subsistence,' what Agur calls "food convenient for us."³

Some have interpreted the words figuratively. They consider them as a prayer for spiritual blessings, under the figure of bread. They view them as equivalent to, 'Give us the bread of life—the true manna whereby we may be nourished

¹ Matth. vi. 11.

² *isidorian*. "Crux non Theologorum duntaxat sed etiam Grammaticorum.--
AMYRAUT.

³ Prov. xxx. 8. The fullest and most satisfactory discussion of this question I have met with is that by Tholuck, vol. ii. 172-196. It is, indeed, quite a masterpiece ; and, but for its length, I should have transferred it into the notes.

up to eternal life ;' some have even strangely supposed that there is a reference to the bread in the Lord's Supper.

There can be no reasonable doubt, that this petition is intended as a prayer for whatever is needful for the body. Bread comprehends all the necessities, but none of the superfluities, of life. If God give us the latter, we should be thankful for them, and employ them as a trust committed to us, to be managed so as to promote the glory of the munificent owner ; but we are not warranted to ask them as what God has promised to give us. "Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content."¹

We are to ask every day, "day by day,"² our necessary bread ; we are not warranted to ask even of the necessities of life, very large supplies, which may serve for weeks, and months, and years to come, but as children entirely dependent on, and completely confiding in, our heavenly Father, we are to ask the supply of our present need, and to expect that to-morrow, when we require to make the same request, we shall obtain the same display of fatherly care.

It has been ingeniously remarked, 'We are to ask our *own* bread. Give us *our bread*,—we are not allowed to ask the bread of others,—we must not covet our neighbour's goods, but must be contented with what God gives us in the way of honest industry, or by the kindness of our friends.'

In this petition we acknowledge our dependence on God for all we have, and for all we need. "Our talents and industry cannot succeed without his concurrence. Our friends and benefactors are entirely dependent on him. Our riches and stores cannot continue without his will. Our health and strength cannot be preserved without his power ; and even though we had the necessities of life in abundance, they cannot support or nourish us without his blessing."³

The spirit which this petition breathes is very different from the temper natural to depraved man. "Man natu-

¹ 1 Tim. vi. 8.

² Matth. *ημετερον*. Luke *και ημετερον*.

³ Brewster.

rally aspires to be independent of God, and to raise himself out of the reach of want and adversity. He cannot trust God to provide for himself and his family, but desires to take this charge on himself. Unlike the sheep of Christ's pasture, who go in and out as he leads them, and look to him to feed them, he emulates the wild beasts who roam through the forests in quest of prey for themselves and their young ones. Ever anxious to accumulate, he has neither time nor inclination to think of anything else, till, in some unexpected hour, he is obliged to spare time to die. Christian, canst thou envy such a man, even when he succeeds to his heart's desire in accumulating wealth,—Wilt thou learn of his ways? It is really better for thee, and for thy children, to receive, as you need it, the supply of your wants. It is better He should provide for you in answer to your prayers, than that you should try to provide for yourself in opposition to His command. 'The young lions lack and suffer hunger, but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.'"¹

The first three petitions in the Lord's Prayer suit perfectly holy beings. They breathe the very spirit of heaven. Angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect, may, we have no doubt they do, join in them. They are the expression of their habitual wishes. "Hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven." The fourth is one which Adam in innocence might have offered. It is an expression of entire dependence on God, and a desire to receive from him what he sees necessary and sufficient for the supply of those wants which rise out of our connection with a body of organised animated matter. But the two concluding petitions speak of guilt and depravity. They could not be offered by the inhabitants of heaven. They could not have been offered by Adam in innocence. They are the cry of the guilty for pardon,

¹ Fuller.

and of the morally imperfect and depraved, for sanctification.

“Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.”¹ It has sometimes been said that “debts” here, mean sins. I do not think that this is an accurate interpretation. To “forgive debts” in the passage before us, is plainly a figurative expression. Man, as a subject of the Divine government, owes God a debt of obedience. All that God requires is due by man. It is plain, however, that debts do not here mean duties, for, in this sense of the word, to remit our debts, were to excuse us from doing our duty, to emancipate us from the law of God. This is what it were unworthy of God to do, and therefore impossible for him to do; and if it were practicable, it would not be benefit but ruin to man. But when man does not discharge the debt of duty, he contracts another kind of debt, the debt of punishment. The sinner owes satisfaction to the law for the wrong he has done it, and this debt can be discharged only by adequate punishment.

These responsibilities are the “debts” referred to in the words before us, and to “forgive us our debts,” is to release us from the obligation to punishment; or in other words, not to exact the debt of satisfaction which we have incurred by neglecting to pay the debt of duty. “Forgive us our debts,” is just ‘punish us not for our sins.’ We are sinners—our sins deserve punishment—but in thy fatherly mercy remit the punishment which our sins deserve. “Deal not with us” either now or hereafter, either in this world, or in the world to come, “according to our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities;” let not those penal evils which are the deserved, and the natural, consequences of transgression, be inflicted on us? “Cast us not away from

¹ Matth. vi. 12.—How strikingly and strangely does this petition for pardon contrast with the pagan's prayer, or rather demand of blessings as things due to him. *Ὁ θεὸς δαίνετέ μοι τὰ ἀρτυρόμαστα!* This, according to Philostratus, was the usual prayer of Apollonius Tyanæus.—Phil. Vit. Ap. i. 11.

thy presence; and take not thy Holy Spirit from us.”¹
Cast us not into hell.

The saints, under the Old Testament economy, were encouraged to present this petition, by “the name of God,” so solemnly declared to Moses :—“The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin ;”² though they must have been greatly perplexed to reconcile the one part of that name with the other: “And that will by no means clear the guilty.” We have much more abundant encouragement to present it, in consequence of God having, in the word of the truth of the Gospel, “Set forth his Son to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God: to declare at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus :”³ and proclaimed himself “God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them: For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”⁴

From this petition it is plain, that all Christians while they are on the earth have sins, daily sins to be forgiven. “It is no doubt to their shame,” as Mr Fuller says, “that it should be so; but so it is, and to disown it, does not make the matter better, but worse.” That man is a sad self-deceiver, dreadfully ignorant of God’s law, and of himself, who does not see that there is much, very much, both wanting and wrong in him, and that he needs to say every day, “Forgive me my debts;” the debts of this day, if not remitted, would require me an eternity to pay. Had I no sins to answer for, but the sins of this day, I were undone for ever, but for the free sovereign mercy of God, manifesting itself through the mediation of Jesus Christ.’ It teaches

¹ Psal. li. 11.

² Rom. iii. 25, 26.

³ Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

⁴ 2 Cor. v. 19, 21.

us, too, that the shedding of Christ's blood, as the price of our redemption, is perfectly consistent with the free love of God, not only in providing the Saviour, but in pardoning the sinner for his sake. Forgiveness is not demanded as a due, but requested as a favour. Had we fully paid the penalty in our own persons, the debt would have been discharged, and, therefore, would not have needed to be remitted; and if our Lord's sufferings had been what some very good, but not very judicious men have represented them, just precisely what the sins of the saved deserved, neither more nor less, whatever gratitude we might owe to God for admitting a surety, and finding a surety, there would be no room for forgiveness of the debt; for in this case too, the debt had been fully paid. In the Scriptures, and the representation is quite in accordance with sound reason, the sinner is always considered as deserving punishment. Punishment is a debt which he owes. The atonement has made the remission of that debt consistent with, ay, gloriously illustrative of, the Divine righteousness. In seeking forgiveness from God, we are never to lose sight of this atonement, as the only medium of forgiveness; yet still we are to ask forgiveness as a free favour. To the very end of life, the Christian must come for forgiveness, just as he did at first; not as a claimant of a right, but as a suppliant for a favour.

The daily coming to God, and requesting him for Christ's sake not to punish us for the sins which we have committed, is perfectly consistent with the important doctrine of the perfection, and the perpetuity, of justification. It is certain that "he that believeth in Christ, shall never come into condemnation;" but that instead of leading to the conclusion, I need not pray for the remission of my debts, suggests the strongest encouragement to present such a petition, just as the Divine assurance that a believer shall persevere to the end, instead of laying a foundation for carelessness, is a most powerful motive to continue "stedfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord."

There is a very important addition to this petition—"As we forgive our debtors."¹ Our "debtors," here, are not solely or principally, if at all, our pecuniary debtors. They are persons who stand to us in some measure in the relation in which we stand to God; persons who have failed to perform to us the debt of duty, and who have incurred the debt of punishment; persons whom, in strict justice, so far as they are concerned, we might punish; in one word, persons who have done us an injury. To forgive these persons their debts, is just not to insist on our right. It refers not so much to our not harbouring ill-will towards persons whom we may have fancied to have injured us, as to our freely forgiving, our not exacting, even if we have it in our power, punishment from a man who has really injured us deeply.

Regard to public justice, which must be maintained to secure the interests of society, may make it my duty to do all that lies in my power to get a man who has injured me adequately punished, but that is perfectly consistent with my having no resentment against the man, perfectly consistent with a feeling, that, but for the interests of society, I should greatly prefer that the man should not be punished at all.

These words certainly cannot be considered as some, I am afraid, do consider them, as stating a meritorious ground on which we claim forgiveness from God; yet they not only teach us, that all who need forgiveness from God, should be ready to extend forgiveness to their fellow-men, but also that no man can rationally expect that this prayer, as presented by him, will be heard, if he is disposed to punish to the utmost all who injure him.

Some have said, and said truly, that, under the influence of such a temper, men cannot have the comfort of forgive-

¹ *Ō*, indicat non *paritatem* sed *similitudinem* rationis.—MALDONATUS. It is a Jesuit that states the distinction; but it is not a Jesuitical distinction. As high as the heaven is above the earth, so is his way of pardoning above ours. Many interpreters consider *ŏ* here as equivalent rather to *since* than to *as*.

ness ; but, assuredly, that is not all. Our Lord's words here, and elsewhere, make it plain that he cannot have the thing itself. For a man, indulging in implacable resentment, to expect that, continuing in that temper of mind, he shall be ultimately saved, is gross presumption ; the only rational expectation in that case is, that he shall " die in his sins," and perish for ever.

It is a very striking consideration, that this petition is so framed, that, if presented in an unforgiving spirit, it is indeed an imprecation of Divine vengeance. He who does not forgive his neighbour his trespasses, when he uses this prayer, in effect asks God not to forgive him his trespasses ; and, if he continue in his present temper, there is no doubt but his prayer will be answered.

The last petition of the Lord's prayer is, " Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." ¹ " Temptation " means ' trial,' and is often used in Scripture, especially in the New Testament, to signify affliction generally. This is not its meaning here. Affliction, in some form or other, is the lot of all men ; and it were folly to expect to be completely exempted from it—it were worse than folly to pray to that effect. Affliction seems a necessary part of moral discipline ; and, to be subjected to it when we need it, is a great blessing. " Behold," says Job, " happy is the man whom God correcteth ; therefore despise not thou the chastening of the Almighty." ² " Blessed," says David, " is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." ³ " Before I was afflicted I went astray ; but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted ; that I might learn thy statutes." ⁴ " Rejoice," says our Lord, when ye are persecuted for righteousness' sake, " and be exceeding glad ; for great is your reward in heaven : for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." ⁵ The apostles felt suffering to be

¹ Matth. vi. 13.

² Psal. cxix. 67, 71.

³ Job v. 17.

⁴ Matth v. 12.

⁵ Psal. xciv. 12.

good, when "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name."¹ This is the apostle Paul's judgment on this point: "We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us:"² And this, the apostle James', "My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trial of your faith worketh patience."³ If these things are so, it would not be wise to pray that we may never be afflicted.

"Temptation" more properly means, whatever is calculated to lead us into sin—the propensities of our depraved nature—the seductions of the world—the suggestions of Satan. In this way, both the afflictions and the comforts of life may be temptations. In the strict sense of the words, God cannot tempt any man:—"Let no man say, when he is tempted, that he is tempted of God."⁴ When God is said to lead men into temptation, the meaning is, In the course of his providence they are placed in circumstances, in which, from their own depravity, or from the depravity of others, they are solicited to sin.

This is a prayer that God would graciously prevent us from being brought into circumstances of strong temptation, that he would not leave us to struggle with temptation in our own strength, that he would instruct us to avoid, that he would enable us to overcome, our temptations.

He who would honestly and acceptably—for, "If we regard iniquity in our hearts, God will not hear us"⁵—present this petition, should guard against going into temptation. There are some fool-hardy persons, who seem glad of an opportunity of having their spiritual strength tried by temptation. They discover great ignorance of themselves,

¹ Acts v. 41.² Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.³ James i. 2, 3.⁴ James i. 13.⁵ Psal. lxxvi. 18.

and a great want of a just sense of the evil of sin. It has been justly said, "He who carries about with him much inflammable matter, would do well to keep at the greatest possible distance from the fire." A person knows that he is very irascible, yet he voluntarily places himself in circumstances, in which he is likely to be put into a passion : a person feels that the love of the world is growing on him, yet he earnestly seeks after a situation, where that principle is likely to be greatly strengthened : a person knows that he has an undue liking to intoxicating liquors, and has often yielded to it, yet, instead of putting himself in circumstances, in which that liking cannot be indulged, voluntarily exposes himself to constant temptation. For persons, acting in this manner, to say, "Lead me not into temptation," is to mock God. They "tempt God." Oh, that such persons would remember that God is not deceived, and that he will not be mocked with impunity ; that, as he is never tempted of sin, he will not always allow himself to be tempted by the sinner !

It is a striking remark of Mr Fuller : "There is no necessary connection between entering into temptation, and coming out of it. Both Judas and Peter went in, but only one of them returned. Those who go in on a presumption of coming out again, are often fatally mistaken. They are 'snared and taken.'"

It is added, "But deliver us from evil." That may mean, either from that which is evil, or from him who is evil—from the evil thing, or from the evil one. I prefer the first sense as the more comprehensive one, and as including the second. It is a prayer to be preserved from everything that is really prejudicial to us, especially from sin, that evil in which there is no good. It matters very little whether this is considered as the positive part of a petition, the negative part of which is, "Lead us not into temptation," or as a separate petition—for deliverance from everything that is really evil, *i. e.*, from sin and its fruits.

I am rather disposed to go along with the Lutherans, and make this the seventh petition.

The concluding doxology does not appear in the prayer, as recorded by Luke; and the best critics are, with great unanimity and decision, of opinion that it was not originally included by Matthew. It seems early to have been introduced into some MSS., in consequence of its having been added to the prayer, when used in public worship.^f

It consists of an ascription of the "kingdom, the power, and the glory to God."¹ It contains a reason both why we ask these things, and why we hope to obtain them. The practical instruction furnished by it is very comprehensively stated in our Shorter Catechism. It teaches us "to draw all our encouragement in prayer from God only," to connect thanksgiving and adoration with petition. It is scarcely necessary to add, that the concluding word, "Amen," is an expression of desire and expectation—so let it be—so shall it be—I earnestly desire it—I firmly expect it.

The fourteenth and fifteenth verses are a kind of explanatory note on the concluding clause of the fifth petition. The meaning of the words is quite plain. The man who is habitually of a forgiving disposition, proves himself to be one of those whose sins have been forgiven by God. The man who is habitually unforgiving, shows with equal clearness that his sins have not been forgiven. We cannot suppose that the forgiveness of those who injure us, can in any degree merit forgiveness of God, or that he will pardon the impenitent and unbelieving, because out of a natural facility of temper, without any regard to God, they forgive others.

The persons addressed are *professed disciples*. When their hearts do not condemn them in this respect, "they have confidence towards God," though conscious of much unworthiness; but if their hearts condemn them, their confidence will be abated, and if they utterly fail in this, their

¹ Matth. vi. 13.

^f See Note F.

hypocrisy will be manifested. The best illustration of this passage, is to be found in our Lord's own words: "Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times; but, Until seventy times seven. Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him which owed him ten thousand talents: But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow-servants, which owed him an hundred pence; and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow-servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not; but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow-servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."¹

¹ Matth. xviii. 21-35.—"The carnal sense, which can never rise to the comprehension of the organic relation of a doctrine, has stopped short at this isolated saying; and, in strict literality, has regarded the assigned condition of

(3.) *Fasting.*¹

We proceed now to make a few explicatory remarks on our Lord's account of the difference between the duty of *fasting*, as performed by the disciples of the Scribes, the Pharisees, and by his disciples, the children of the kingdom.

"Moreover, when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."²

In speaking of fasting, our Lord makes use of the same sort of language, as he employs in reference to alms and prayer. "When thou doest alms," "when thou prayest," "when ye fast." He does not enjoin these exercises, but he proceeds on the principle, that the children of the kingdom were to perform them. He takes for granted, that they would do alms, pray, and fast.

The first thing to be done here, is to ascertain the true meaning and reference of the word "fast." To fast, means to abstain from food; but as it is plain, that it is a religious duty that our Lord refers to, the word must be understood as expressive of abstinence from food for a religious purpose, and in connection with, and in subservience to, religious exercises.

There is no general injunction, either in the Old or in the New Testament, of abstinence from food, whether partial or total, as connected with, or subsidiary to, religious duties.

the forgiveness of sins as the only condition at all. It is natural that, by this mode of handling the Scripture, it should swarm with contradictions."—THOLOCK.

¹ "The rule of christian ethics, in regard to fasting, is, that it is neither enjoined nor recommended, but only justified as the natural expression of certain states of feeling analogous to those of the disciples under the sense of separation from their Master. In such states of the interior life, all outward signs of peace and joy—all participation in social intercourse and enjoyment—are unnatural and repugnant." Luke v. 33.—NEANDER. Vide Vernede, iii. Ser. xxiii.

² Matth. vi. 16-18.

The only fast of direct Divine appointment, was that to be observed by the Jews on the tenth day of the seventh month,—the great day of expiation;¹ and even with regard to it, we do not find abstinence expressly commanded: if observed, it must have been merely because found subservient to the great purpose of that day, which was mental humiliation on account of sin,—the afflicting the soul.

In the later ages of the Jewish commonwealth, there was a number of other public fasts observed annually, but we have no reason to think they were of direct Divine appointment. The true account of the matter seems to be this. The use of a full, and especially of a luxurious diet, is inconsistent with that clear, calm, state of thought and feeling which devotional exercises require. When the mind and the heart, are very much engaged with any subject, especially if that subject is of a serious and mournful kind, there is an indisposition to take food; and in that state of mind produced by a deep sense of the evil of sin, and of the supreme importance of things unseen and eternal, to refrain from food seems a natural expression of our sense of our own unworthiness, and the comparative insignificance of all earthly things. These seem the principles on which the practice of fasting is founded, and though like kneeling or prostration in prayer, not of express Divine appointment, it may be, it has been, found, useful as a help to the right performance of those spiritual exercises in which, under every dispensation, all really acceptable religion consists.

“Fasting,”—abstinence, either total or partial, from food, seems in all ages of the world to have been connected with seasons of peculiarly solemn devotion. The inhabitants of Nineveh connected fasting with their deprecation of the Divine vengeance, denounced by the prophet Jonah.² In circumstances of remarkable danger, the pious kings and prophets of Israel called on the people to engage in fasting

¹ Lev. xxiii. 27-29. Zach. viii. 19. Acts xxvii. 9.

² Jonah iii. 6, 7, 8.

as well as in prayer.¹ And indeed so closely associated were the ideas of fasting, and a season of extraordinary prayer,—especially for deliverance from threatened judgments, that the ordinary name for such a season seems to have been, a fast.² A season of extraordinary devotion was called a fast, on the same principle, that we describe a very pious man, as much in his closet, often on his knees.

It was the practice of the pious, under the Old Testament dispensation, not only devoutly to observe the public fasts, but to set apart periods of time, sometimes longer, sometimes shorter, for extraordinary religious exercises, and with these they seem to have usually connected abstinence, partial or total. David tells us, that he “humbled his soul with fasting.” Daniel “set his face to seek the Lord by prayer, and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes.” Nehemiah “mourned certain days, and fasted.” And Anna, the prophetess, “served God with fastings and prayers.”³

The natural course of things, the tendency in the depraved mind of man to rest in what is external, and to substitute what was originally the means or the sign, for the end, and the thing signified, manifested itself with regard to fasting, and in the days of our Lord, a great part of the religion of the Jews, especially of the Pharisees, seems to have consisted in literal abstinence, total or partial. The Pharisees fasted often; “I fast,” says the Pharisee who went up to the temple to pray, “I fast twice a-week.”

Our Lord did not prohibit fasting as a means or an expression of religion. Whatever he says on the subject is rather favourable to the practice. In the passage before us, he takes for granted that his disciples would fast. He defends his disciples for not fasting while he was with them; but says, after his departure, they would fast. He mentions fasting along with prayer, to describe that extraordinary de-

¹ 2 Chron. xx. 3. Ezra viii. 21. Jer. xxxvi. 9. Joel i. 14.

² 2 Sam. xii. 16. Jer. xiv. 12.

³ Psal. xxxv. 13. Dan. ix. 3. Neh. i. 4. Luke ii. 37.

votion which was the appointed means of obtaining that faith which was necessary to cast out demons of the most malignant kind.¹

We find our Lord's primitive disciples fasting and praying, or praying with fasting, on occasions peculiarly important and solemn; and the Apostle Paul seems plainly to hint that it was the ordinary and proper practice of Christians in general, occasionally to "give themselves to prayer and fasting," that is, to observe seasons of extraordinary devotion, and to use abstinence, total or partial, as a subsidiary to the religious exercises engaged in on these occasions.²

In the degenerate Christian, as in the degenerate Jewish Church, fasts were put out of their place; and, instead of a means or expression of devotion, were constituted principal parts of religious worship. The fasts appointed by the Roman Catholic Church are very numerous. This abuse has led to an opposite extreme among Protestant Christians, and I apprehend that the use of abstinence from food, as a means or expression of devotion, is exceedingly little known, at any rate, among the professors of Christianity in our country and age.

Fasting, in connection with religion, is plainly entirely instrumental—a means in order to an end. It is a well-known fact that abstinence produces different effects on different constitutions; that a measure of abstinence, which might be useful to one, would be injurious to another; that what might fix attention in one would distract it in another; and, as there is no express statute in the case, "wisdom is profitable to direct;" but, at the same time, I am afraid many of us are blameable in having left altogether untried, a means which nature seems to dictate, and which has been employed with success, by many of the wisest and best men in all ages, for giving greater intensesness to our attention, and greater fervour to our devotion, in those seasons of extraor-

¹ Matth. ix. 14, 15; xvii. 21.

² Acts xlii. 2, 3; xiv. 23. 1 Cor. vii. 5.

dinary religious service in which, it would appear, the saints, both under the Old and New Testament dispensations, engaged. Indeed, I am afraid these seasons are themselves much more unfrequent than they might be. It appears to me that fasting, in our Lord's use of the term, is just equal to observing a season of extraordinary devotion with which abstinence from food was connected as at once the means and the expression of devotion.

The fasts referred to are not the public fasts, just as the prayers referred to are not the public prayers. The fasts referred to are seasons of extraordinary devotion which the individual observes for his own spiritual improvement. Having shown his disciples how, in the ordinary exercises of devotion, they should exceed the Pharisees, he proceeds to show how they should exceed them in their extraordinary exercises of devotion.

And, you will observe, he does not say that their fasts are to be more frequent or more rigid than those of the Pharisees; but he does say, they are not to have that character of ostentation which belonged to the fasts of the Pharisees. In fasting, as in prayer, they are to seek, not man's applause, but God's approbation; and, in the manner in which they conduct their extraordinary, as well as their ordinary devotions, they are to show this.

We are now ready to enter on the exposition of our Lord's words; and, after these preliminary remarks, much time will not require to be devoted to their exposition. "When ye fast," that is, when ye devote a portion of time to the purpose of extraordinary devotion, especially to the exercises of penitential confession and deprecatory supplication, accompanied by abstinence, "be not as the hypocrites," that is, 'act not in the manner in which these hypocrites, these stage-players, the Pharisees, behave.' Then he proceeds to give us an account of the manner in which they conducted themselves: "They put on a sad countenance, and disfigured their faces, that they might seem to men to fast." It was

the custom of the Jews to begin their fasts as they began their Sabbaths, at sunset, and to continue them to the same time of the following day. During that period, they not only abstained from food, but from bathing, from perfumes, from anointing, from pleasure and recreation of every kind. They generally fasted twice in the week—on Monday and Thursday—from regard to a tradition of the elders, that Moses went up to Sinai to receive the law on the last of these days, and returned on the first of them. They considered these fasts as a great part of their religion, and were anxious to make the most of them in the way of levying a tax of admiration from their superstitious countrymen.

Instead of keeping at home on these days, and devoting the time to those exercises of which fasting was but the means and the sign, they went abroad, and, like true stage-players, exhibited, in an extravagant degree, all the symptoms of a state of mind which they did not feel, but which they wished others to believe they experienced. They assumed a sad countenance, and disfigured their faces. "They employed all the usual tokens of deep affliction and mental distress. They covered their heads with dust and ashes, veiled their countenances, neglected their dress, and deformed their features, by contracting them into the most gloomy and dejected looks. They studiously exhibited all the external appearances of humiliation, while their hearts were lifted up in spiritual pride;"¹ and they did this, that they might appear to men to fast—that they might be taken notice of as remarkably religious persons. "Verily," says our Lord, "they have their reward." They have it now in the admiration of men; they will have it by and bye in the disapprobation of God.

Our Lord does not here reprobate the very natural practice of allowing the countenance to express the sentiments and emotions of the heart. "A sad countenance, if it is ex-

¹ Brewster.

pressive of a sad heart, and in our secret approaches to God, has nothing in it improper. The evil consists in counterfeit sadness and in ostentatious grief.”¹

Here, as in the case of alms and prayer, our Lord not only shows his disciples how they were not to fast, but also how they were to fast. “But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;”² that thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly.”³

The general meaning is quite obvious: ‘When you devote a portion of time to extraordinary private devotion, let there be nothing in your dress or in your general appearance to indicate this to others. It is not necessary—it may not be proper—in every case, sedulously to conceal the fact that you do observe such seasons; but make no ostentatious display of your performance of this religious duty which, from its nature, ought to be secret; make no show of your feelings; claim no notice from men at these times of peculiar devotion.’ This exhortation certainly does not mean that, on these occasions, men should assume a cheerfulness they do not feel, but that there should be nothing in the dress or in the appearance calculated to attract notice; that there should be no abatement in the ordinary attention to cleanliness of person or propriety of apparel; and that, when having brought the solemn services of the closet to a termination, they go out to society, there should be nothing to tell the world how they have been engaged.⁴

In these solemn services, it is with God we have to do, and not with men. To him let your views be directed; to him let your hearts be unfolded; “weep and make supplication before him.” It is his pardon and favour you are soliciting.

¹ Fuller.

² The ascetics give a mystical meaning to these words. They explain the anointing the head and washing the face to mean the putting away of sin. With a principle of interpretation like this, “black” may mean “white,” and “any thing” may mean “any thing,” “every thing,” or “nothing.”

³ Matth. vi. 17, 18.

⁴ Brewster.

Such exercises, when engaged in from right principles, are at once salutary to the soul, and acceptable to God. Your Father who seeth in secret—he marks your humiliation of spirit—he accepts of the sacrifice of a broken heart—he “looks to, and he will dwell with, the man of a humble and contrite spirit, who trembles at his word”—he graciously approves now of such a fast, and on the most eventful day of the world’s history “he will reward you openly.”

From these injunctions of our Lord, we may warrantably draw the conclusions, that Christians while they ought to manifest a habitual seriousness, should carefully avoid everything like affected solemnity of manner; and that “if, even when engaged in those religious services which, from their nature, are most fitted to sadden the countenance, they are to guard against all external display of melancholy, surely much more is it their duty to manifest, in their general deportment, the natural symptoms of a cheerful, contented, happy mind.”¹ Few things injure religion more than the moroseness and apparent inward unhappiness of its professors. Wherever the religion of Jesus is understood and believed, it sheds over the mind a peace which passeth all understanding, and gives to the whole manner the air of quiet satisfaction and tranquil happiness. We do not call on professing Christians to assume the appearance of a peace and happiness they do not possess; but we do call on them to open their minds to the blessed influence of the truth they profess to believe; and by a natural display of the effects of this influence on their hearts and characters, to “adorn” and recommend “the doctrine of God our Saviour.” Oh, it ill becomes a Christian so to yield, it may be, to the power of a constitutional tendency to melancholy, or it may be, to mistaken apprehensions and unbelieving fears, as to give plausibility to the calumny of the infidel and scorner, that Christianity, after all its boasting, is at least as incapable as anything else to make men happy.

¹ Brewster.

Let us all, my brethren, who in any measure know the truth, make it evident that the truth has not made us slaves, but "made us free," and that when we "keep God's commandments," we then "walk at liberty." Let us show that "in keeping these commandments we have indeed a great reward," that our Saviour's yoke is "an easy yoke, and his burden a light burden," that "his ways are pleasantness and his paths peace," and let the rational happiness, "the rest and the refreshing" we obviously enjoy from our religion, not proclaimed in words, but exhibited in our mein and conduct, form as it were an invitation to all around us, to "come and taste" with us "that God is good." Even while we are silent, let our holy, happy lives, say to the worldly and the wicked around us, "Come with us and we will do you good, for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel."

V. THE OBJECT OF SUPREME DESIRE TO CHRISTIANS, AND
THE MEANS OF OBTAINING IT.

MATTHEW VI. 19-34.

I have had occasion to remark repeatedly to you, since I began these expository discourses on "the Sermon on the Mount," that the key to it is to be found in the word "REPENT"—change your mind—that it is an extended illustration of the general exhortation which held so prominent a place in our Lord's preaching, as well as in that of his forerunner. The Jewish people expected in their Messiah a temporal prince, and the happiness which they anticipated under his reign, was merely a very high degree of worldly prosperity. They expected to enjoy, in abundance, riches, and honour, and pleasure. In the passage before us, our Lord informs them that such anticipations were founded in error—that the happiness to be enjoyed under the Messiah is spiritual, not carnal, in its nature—

that it is to be found in perfection, not on earth but in heaven—that just views on this subject are of infinite importance—that the attainment of this happiness ought to constitute their chief end—that this end could be gained only by strenuously prosecuting it—and that in making the pursuit of this happiness their principal employment, there was no ground for anxiety about things seen and temporal, to those who “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness,” for everything they need shall certainly be given them. Such is the outline of this interesting paragraph, which commences with the nineteenth verse, and reaches to the end of this chapter.

Let us proceed more minutely to examine its various parts:—“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”¹

Some have interpreted the command, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth,” literally. One class of these interpreters understand the command, without any limitation, as a prohibition of accumulation in any measure, as a declaration that in no case is it lawful to add to our property, but that our expenditure should keep pace with our gains, and that no man should ever allow himself to become rich.

This, however, does not seem to be its meaning. It has been very justly said, that they who condemn all accumulation, to be consistent, “should not stop here, but go on to ‘sell all that they have and give it to the poor,’ for the one is no less expressly enjoined than the other. But this were to overturn all distinctions of rich and poor, and all possession of property; which is as contrary to the whole current of Scripture as inconsistent with the welfare of human society.”²

¹ Matth. vi. 19, 20.

² Fuller.

The other class of interpreters who understand the words literally, consider our Lord as saying merely, 'Do not bestow your principal attention on the accumulation of earthly treasures, but on the attainment of heavenly happiness,' as when he says—"Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for the meat which endureth unto eternal life," that is, 'Let not the attainment of material bread which nourisheth the dying body, occupy so much of your time and attention, as the attainment of spiritual food which sustains the never dying soul. Be not so anxious to heap up wealth as to secure heaven.' This idea is, I have no doubt contained in the words, but it is contained in them merely because they are expressive of a much more comprehensive sentiment.

The phrase "lay up treasures" in the first injunction, is, I apprehend, figurative, as it obviously is in the second. To "lay up treasure in heaven" cannot mean, to make heaven, not earth, the repository of the wealth we may accumulate. It means obviously to seek for, and expect, happiness in heaven. In like manner, to "lay up treasures on earth" is to seek, or expect, happiness on earth, or in earthly objects, in the wealth, in the honours, in the pleasures of the present state. It is as if our Lord had said, 'I know you are looking for happiness on the earth under the Messiah's reign, that you are expecting it in a state of worldly prosperity; but you must "repent," you must change your mind, or you will be miserably disappointed. The happiness which the Messiah brings is spiritual happiness. It is to be enjoyed in perfection not on earth, but in heaven, and it is of a far higher and more excellent nature than that earthly happiness which you are making the chief object of affection and pursuit. "Lay not up treasures on earth," do not attempt to build a permanent residence for yourselves here. Do not set your hearts on any thing seen and temporal as worth your supreme attention, or capable of satisfying all your wishes.'

The reason our Lord assigns for this injunction is appropriate and forcible : All things material are liable to change, and destruction ; they may be wrested from us by the arm of violence, they may moulder away in our possession.

There is a peculiar beauty and propriety in the figurative language used by our Lord : “Moth and rust corrupt—thieves break through and steal.” In Oriental countries, and in an age when commerce was comparatively in its infancy, the rich were distinguished from the poor, chiefly by large wardrobes of costly garments, by hoards of the precious metals, either in small pieces for the purpose of exchange, or formed into vessels of curious workmanship, and by richly stored repositories of grain and fruits, and similar provisions. These treasures were peculiarly liable to be consumed by the moth, and by rust, and in danger of being carried off by the thief or the robber.

The idea intended to be conveyed is, ‘All happiness of a worldly kind is uncertain, all earthly enjoyments are at once perishable in themselves, and in danger of being lost by innumerable accidents.’ All the possessions and pleasures that are to be found in this life, are unquestionably, in their own nature, liable to decay, and “perish in the using.” Even when they are not taken from us, how often do they lose the qualities which originally fixed our regard, and though they do not cease to exist, cease to please ! Like faded flowers, they become offensive instead of pleasant. Even if they were more satisfying and less corruptible than they are, how difficult—in many cases, how impossible—it is to retain them long ! “They take to themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven ;” and though they continue, how easily can the stroke of disease render us totally incapable of enjoying them, and how suddenly may, how certainly must, the stroke of death separate us at once and for ever from them, and send us away “Naked as we came.”

The uncertainty of worldly treasure, in one of its most coveted forms, wealth, is most graphically described by our Lord. "The ground of a certain rich man brought forth plentifully : And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do : I will pull down my barns, and build greater ; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years ; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee : then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."¹

Is it not folly, then, to seek for happiness in earthly things? Let us thankfully receive, let us temperately enjoy, that portion of the good things of this life, which our Father who is in heaven is pleased to bestow on us, but let us not set our affections on them. Let us not seek our happiness in them. Let us not take up with them as if they could be a satisfying portion to our rational immortal natures.

Instead of seeking happiness on earth, let us seek it in heaven. "Lay up," says our Lord, "treasures for yourselves in heaven, where moth and rust do not corrupt, nor thieves break through nor steal." As to lay up our treasures on earth, is to expect and seek for happiness in earthly things, so to lay up our treasures in heaven, is just to expect and to seek happiness in heavenly things, things unseen and eternal. The happiness of a being like man, spiritual and immortal, and intimately related to God, consists in as perfect a knowledge of God, as complete a conformity to God, as close an intercourse with God, as his capacities admit of, and this maintained throughout the whole eternity of his being. This is man's true happi-

¹ Luke xii. 16-21.

ness. This is to be obtained only in heaven. God is in heaven, and "with him is the fountain of life."¹

This happiness is placed beyond the reach of accident or change. Force cannot wrest it from us; fraud cannot beguile us of it. It forms part of the very nature, intellectual and moral, of him who possesses it, and he can no more lose it, than he can lose himself. The inheritance above is "incorruptible, and undefiled, and fadeth not away."² There is nothing in its own nature to cause decay, and it is secured from all external violence. It is at once incorruptible and eternal. It is thus suited to the immortal spirit. Instead of weakening and wearying our powers, it exalts and strengthens them. "The appetite grows with what it feeds on." The satisfactions rising out of these celestial enjoyments are not lessened by repetition, nor disturbed by the fear of their coming to an end. They shall endure for ever, and shall not merely never be diminished, but shall grow with the enlarging capacity for excellence and happiness, throughout eternity. Surely, then, our Lord's exhortation is a most reasonable one. 'Seek for happiness, not on earth, but in heaven.'

It is of the utmost importance, that we form a just estimate of what is necessary to true happiness, a just judgment as to where true happiness is to be found, for the whole tenor of our thoughts, and affections, and active pursuits, will be regulated by that estimate and judgment. "Where the treasure is, there will the heart be also." Whatever we consider as our chief good,—that which is at once necessary and sufficient to make us happy,—will, from the very constitution of our nature, employ our principal thoughts, draw forth our most earnest desires, fix our fondest affections, stimulate and guide our most active and persevering pursuits. It is, therefore, of the utmost importance, that we form a just judgment where our treasure lies.

¹ Psal. xxxvi. 9.

² 1 Pet. i. 4.

If we think happiness is to be found in wealth, or in honour, or in power, or in worldly pleasures, whether sensual, intellectual, or social—if we think it is to be found in any thing earthly—then our whole character will be “of the earth, earthly;” our thoughts, our affections, our desires, our pursuits, will all correspond with the object of our supreme estimation. And, on the other hand, if we be persuaded happiness is to be found in heaven, and only in heaven, in knowing God, in loving God, in being loved by God, in knowing that we are loved by God, in being like God—thinking along with God, willing along with God, choosing what he chooses, finding enjoyment in what he finds enjoyment, then our whole character will be spiritual and heavenly, our thoughts, and affections, and desires, and pursuits, will correspond in their nature to the object of our supreme esteem. Of so much importance is it to place our treasure right, that is, in other and plainer words, to have right views of what is necessary and sufficient to make such beings as we are truly happy.

This truth our Lord illustrates by a very significant figure. “The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”¹

The meaning of these words will be plain, if a slight alteration in the rendering—which, I apprehend, is not only warrantable, but necessary—be adopted. “The light of the body is the eye, if then thine eye be sound, the whole body is full of light; but if thine eye be distempered, then thy whole body is full of darkness; and if even the light in thee is darkness, how great will be that darkness!”² The eye is

¹ Matth. vi. 22, 23.

² Πνεῦμα ἰχθυος, and πᾶν ἰχθυος, are the opposite of ὑγιαινόν. Ἀπλοῦς is the translation of the Hebrew, כָּמֵר, which is also rendered by ἐλάλητος, which is equivalent often to healthy, whole and sound. Theophylact expounds ἀπλοῦς by

not the source of light, that is the sun ; but it is necessary to the man deriving any advantage from the sun. It is, as it were, the window of the body. If the eye be sound, the whole body is full of light ; that is, all the members of the body enjoy the advantages of the light—the hands and the feet know, as it were, what they are about—the man knows what he is doing, and where he is going ; but if the eye be distempered, if the man be blind altogether, or if his eyes be so distempered as to mistake one object for another, the whole body is full of darkness, his hands and his feet can be of comparatively little use to him, he is in constant hazard of stumbling and falling, and when he thinks himself in perfect safety, he may be in extreme danger. He stretches out his hand to lay hold of something that he accounts valuable, and grasps the empty air ; he moves forward, thinking himself on level ground, and he falls over a precipice.¹

If that which is the light of the body be darkness, if the eye be quenched, or darkened, how great is the darkness thus produced ! The only access which light can have to the body is closed, and of course all is darkness. This seems the literal meaning of our Lord's words. Now, for their figurative signification.

Truth is the light of the mind ; and the faculty which apprehends truth, howsoever it be denominated, is the eye of the mind. If this mental eye be sound, the whole inner man is full of light. If we have just views, if we have a clear perception, and a firm belief of the truth, then all the powers of our nature will be influenced by this, and perform their various functions properly—our desires, our affections, our active exertions, will be what they ought to be ; but if the

ὕψις, and *πεινὴς* by *ισώδης*. It is a beautiful but fanciful thought of Quesnel—"The mystic eye does not see double. It sees only God as the object of supreme affection."

¹ "Ὅταν γὰρ ὁ κυβερνήτης ἀποβρύχιος γίνῃται, καὶ ὁ λύχνος σβησθῇ, καὶ ὁ ἡγεμὼν αἰχμαλώτος γίνῃται, πόῃα λοιπὸν ἴσται τοῖς ὑπηκόοις ἰστίε."—CHRYSOSTOM. "When the pilot is drowned, and the light extinguished, and the captain taken prisoner, what more hope is there for the crew?"—Quoted by THOLUCK.

mental eye be blinded by ignorance, and distempered by error, then the whole inner man will be full of darkness. If we do not know and believe the truth, we cannot be influenced by it. If we believe error, we will be influenced by it. If we do not know God as the fountain of excellence and happiness, we will not love him, we will not seek after his favour, and image, and fellowship, and enjoyment. If we suppose that the world in any of its forms can make us happy, then our thoughts, and our desires, and our affections, and our pursuits, will all take a wrong direction ; and if that which is the light of the mind be darkened, “ how great is the darkness ! ” If we mistake error for truth, the whole of our affections and pursuits must be misplaced and misdirected.

This is most important general truth ; but it is brought forward by our Lord with a peculiar reference. It is as if he had said, ‘ True happiness is of a spiritual, not of a carnal nature. It is to be found in perfection, not on earth, but in heaven. A firm conviction of this is absolutely necessary to your thoughts, and affections, and pursuits, taking that direction which is necessary, in order to your obtaining true happiness. You are expecting happiness from the Messiah, but it is worldly happiness you are expecting : while your minds are occupied with this delusion, you can never obtain the happiness which the Messiah has to bestow. Indeed, while your minds are occupied with this delusion, you have no proper notion of its nature, and all the doctrine of the kingdom is “ foolishness ” to you. But, when you come to see plainly that your treasure is in heaven, your heart will soon be there also : as soon as you apprehend the true nature of the happiness which you need, and the Messiah has to bestow, then a flood of light will be poured on every other subject—your affections will go forth towards this happiness, and all the active powers of your nature will exert themselves, according to the appointed method for obtaining it.’

A Jew, with his carnal views, could not possibly obtain

the happiness which the Messiah came to bestow. He must "repent," he must change his mind, he must be "born again," in order to his "seeing," in order to his "entering into the kingdom of God." And it is equally true still. While men labour under the notion, that happiness is to be found in "things seen and temporal," everything in Christianity must be confusion and darkness to them. Its doctrines must appear uninteresting, unintelligible, and incredible, its precepts hard sayings, its duties burdensome observances; but, let a man be deeply persuaded that his happiness is in God, then the doctrine of the atonement, as the means of restoring him to God's favour, and that of Divine influence, as the means of fitting him for God's fellowship, which were formerly "foolishness," appear to be "the wisdom of God;" and reading the Scriptures, and prayer, and other religious exercises, are attended to, and delighted in, as, in their own nature, fitted for communicating, in some measure, true heavenly happiness even here, and for preparing for the full enjoyment of it hereafter. When the eye becomes sound, the whole body becomes full of light.

I conclude my observations on this subject, with the judicious and forcible remarks of Mr Scott:—"The words in the text immediately relate to men's practical judgments of earthly and heavenly things. The worldly man mistakes, in his first principle, and therefore all his reasonings and calculations must be erroneous; and the farther he goes, the more fatally is he bewildered. But it is equally true in reference to false religion. When that which a man deems extraordinary illumination, whether from philosophy or enthusiasm, is a mere delusion, his very light is thick darkness from the bottomless pit—all his inferences and proceedings lead him farther from God, from truth, and from holiness, and plunge him still deeper into error, prejudices, spiritual pride, and the snare of the prince of darkness."

It is not only necessary that the mind be enlightened in

the fact that happiness is of a spiritual nature, and to be found in perfection only in heaven, but the desire and pursuit of this happiness must be supreme, and cannot be conjoined with an equal intensity of desire and pursuit of happiness in things seen and temporal. The impossibility of making both worldly and heavenly happiness the object of supreme affection and pursuit, is the sentiment expressed in the next declaration of our Lord :—"No man can serve two masters : for either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." ¹

There is an obscurity cast on these words, from their seeming to indicate a contrast between loving a master, and holding to him—between hating a master, and despising him. It is difficult to see in what the contrast lies. Some interpreters have endeavoured to remove the difficulty by rendering it thus : "Either he will hate the one, and love the other ; or, at least, he will hold to the one, and despise the other." But this is not satisfactory. I apprehend, the particle rendered *either*, and *or*, is not here disjunctive at all, but as it often is, interrogative, or affirmative.² I think our Lord's meaning may be given thus : "No man can serve two masters ; for will he not love the one, and hate the other—will he not cleave to the one, and despise the other ?" or thus : "For surely he will love the one, and hate the other—surely he will cleave to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

The object of our Lord is plainly to illustrate, by a figure, the impossibility of making at the same time, earthly and heavenly happiness, the objects of esteem and pursuit:—"No man can serve two masters." To understand the force of our Lord's illustration, two things must be observed. First, That the word "serve" does not signify to do an occasional

¹ Matth. vi. 24.

² & vide Robinson *in verb.* Matth. vii. 9 ; xx. 15. Rom. iii. 29. 1 Cor. i. 13. Heb. vi. 14. Gen. xlii. Num. xiv. 16. 23 ; lxx.

act of obedience, but to be a bond-servant, a slave, the property of his master, and entirely subject to his will : no one can be thus a servant to two masters; and, secondly, That the two masters are plainly presumed to be of different and opposite characters ; and, consequently, that course of conduct, which would be accounted service by the one, would not be accounted service by the other. With these explications, as the meaning of our Lord's statement is plain, so its truth is indubitable. A man may be a servant to two masters in succession, even although they should be of very different and directly opposite characters. A man may serve two masters of opposite characters—the one in profession, the other in reality. A man may serve two masters unequally—occasionally doing an act of service to the one, while he usually, habitually, serves the other. A man may serve two or more masters, if they are all on one side, all subordinate to one another : a soldier may serve his king, and, at the same time, his commanding officer, and his inferior officers, for, in obeying them, he is obeying his prince ; but no man can be at the same time, in reality, habitually the servant of two masters, who are hostile to each other, and whose interests are entirely incompatible. In this sense our Lord says, “ Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”¹

To serve God, is the same thing as to “ lay up treasures in heaven.” By a Divine appointment true happiness is to be found only there, and he who has made this appointment, has also ordained certain means, by the use of which man may attain this happiness. He who makes the attainment of this happiness, by these means, the great object of life, is the servant of God : he does the will of God.

To serve mammon, is the same thing as “ to lay up treasures on earth.” Mammon is a Syriac word, signifying riches or gain.² It is seemingly equivalent to the word

¹ Jay.

² “ The word occurs frequently in the Targum and among the Rabbins, and also in Syriac authors, and in the Samaritan version. Augustine says, ‘ *Lucrum Punicé mammon dicitur.*’”—*THEOLUCK. Vide Clem. Alex. Strom., lib. vii.*

world, as it is often employed in the New Testament—"things seen and temporal." These are often personified, and represent a god whom men worship, or a master whom they serve; and their influence over our minds and affections in leading us to seek happiness in them, and to use the appropriate means of obtaining that happiness, is the power of this prince and master, and our yielding to that influence is the service we render him.

The general truth here stated is, "that the course of sentiment and conduct which is necessary, by Divine appointment, to obtain the heavenly happiness, and the course of sentiment and conduct that is necessary to secure what is ordinarily termed earthly happiness, are quite incompatible; and cannot be conjoined, at the same time, in the same individual."

The Jews had some indistinct notions of happiness in a future world, under the Messiah; but their minds were chiefly occupied with dreams of carnal prosperity on the earth; and they thought the expectation of worldly prosperity and future happiness perfectly consistent. But our Lord informs them they are in a mistake—they must "repent"—they must change their minds.

And so it is in every age. There are many men who hope that, while they are seeking their happiness in earthly objects, it may be possible, at the same time, to secure the enjoyment of the heavenly felicity. But, no!—there is no serving, at the same time, two such masters—there is no serving God and mammon.

There is a possibility of serving them in succession. Indeed, all who serve God once served mammon. They once "served divers lusts and pleasures;" but now, "being made free from sin, they are become the servants of righteousness"—the servants of God.

There is a possibility of serving the one in pretence, and the other in reality. Alas! how many call Jehovah Lord, and yet, in reality, worship mammon; how many professors

of Christianity, as to their hearts, are thoroughly worldly—completely secular in all their affections and desires, and schemes and pursuits! Their very religion is worldly. Such persons are, however, not the servants of God. Men may suppose them to be so, though generally even men are not imposed on in such cases. But, however this may be, God is not deceived, and he will not suffer himself to be mocked with impunity.

There is a possibility of a man doing occasionally what is in itself agreeable to the will of God, while habitually he disobeys God in serving mammon; but such occasional acts are not service—they are not obedience—they are not done *because* God requires them, nor *as* God requires them.

There is a possibility of obeying parents, and earthly masters, and lawful magistrates, and obeying God at the same time. In obeying those whom God commands us to obey, we obey himself; but mammon is not God's vicegerent. He is the usurper of his throne; and, therefore, cannot be obeyed, without treason against our legitimate sovereign.

The thing is perfectly plain: God says, "Give me thine heart;" and the world says, Give me thine heart; and we have but one heart to give. God says, Give me all thy heart—"thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul;" and, though the world or mammon often pretends that a share of the heart will satisfy his demands, he well knows that, if he get a part of the heart, he is sure of the whole of it; and his having, in a single department, the supremacy, totally unfits the person for being a servant to his divine rival, if I may use the expression.

Indeed, as has been strikingly remarked by a living writer, "Their orders are diametrically opposed. The one commands you to walk by faith, the other to walk by sight; the one to be humble, the other to be proud; the one to set your affections on things above, the other to set them on the things that are on the earth; the one to look at the things unseen and eternal, the other to look at the things seen and

temporal ; the one to have your conversation in heaven, the other to cleave to the dust ; the one to be careful for nothing, the other to be all anxiety ; the one to be content with such things as ye have, the other to enlarge your desires as hell ; the one to be ready to distribute, the other to withhold ; the one to look at the things of others, the other to look only at one's own things ; the one to seek happiness in the Creator, the other to seek happiness in the creature. Is it not plain there is no serving two such masters ? If you love the one, you must hate the other ; if you cleave to the one, you must despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. To serve mammon, to lay up treasures on earth, is to make present, sensible, worldly things, the great subjects of our thoughts, the great objects of our affections. To serve God, to lay up treasures in heaven, is just to make things divine and heavenly the great subjects of our thoughts, and the great objects of our affections. The two things are obviously incompatible. The covetous man is an idolater. The friendship of the world is enmity with God ; 'whosoever will be a friend of the world, must be an enemy of God.'"¹

The words of our Lord, while they distinctly state that the service of the world, and the service of God—the seeking of happiness on earth, and the seeking it in heaven—are quite incompatible, obviously imply, that all must either serve the world or God ; all must seek happiness, either on earth or in heaven. Man is not, cannot be, independent ; he is not self-sufficient, he must seek for happiness, and seek for it out of himself. Those who will not serve God, must serve mammon. Such persons often think themselves truly free, and regard with contempt the loyal subjects of Jehovah, as a set of mean-spirited slaves ; but "while they promise themselves liberty, they are indeed the servants of corruption ; for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he held in bondage." He who is not the subject of humility, must be

¹ Jay.

the vassal of pride; he who is not the servant of meekness, must be the slave of passion.

The following picture of the vile slavery, and the degrading service, in which mammon holds and employs those who will not submit to the divine law of liberty and love, is very striking. May God render it effectual for making some of these miserable vassals feel the weight of their chains, and long for the liberty of God's children. "O ye votaries of the world, think of your privations, and sacrifices, and submissions; think of the numerous and arbitrary laws you have to obey,—the laws of opinion, the laws of custom, the laws of extravagance, the laws of folly. Yes, I sometimes think if religion were to require of me such services, as the world imposes upon its enslaved followers,—if it required me to turn day into night, and deprived me of seasonable repose,—if it required me to embrace indecent and injurious fashions, and to expose at once my modesty and my health,—if it required me to adopt expensive modes of life, which devoured my substance, and involved me in pecuniary disgrace,—if it required me to spend my evenings from home, and to resign domestic enjoyments, in order to rove from one insipid amusement to another,—if it required me to give up all that is easy and simple, and natural, for ceremonies, and visits, and crowds, where all is artificial, and studied, and forced,—if it required me to convert my dwelling into the confusion of a rout, to stoop to the absurdity of a masquerade, to hazard my own life and the life of my fellow-creatures, because I had received an offence, it may be, unintentionally given, and allowed me not the choice of a refusal,—then I should conceive a disgust, then I should sigh for liberty. You tell us our Master requires us to deny ourselves. Does your master require no self-denial? As to self-denial, we are nearly on a level; but here is the difference,—Our Master requires us to deny what is false and vain, yours what is solid and true; ours requires us to deny what would make us miserable, yours what would render you happy; ours

requires us to deny the cravings of passion and appetite, yours the demands of reason and of conscience; ours requires us to deny the body for the sake of the soul, yours to deny the soul for the sake of the body; ours requires us to give up nothing but what we are the better for wanting, and for which he will richly recompense us, yours to part with what will make you poor indeed, for ever and ever.”¹

To make the attainment of earthly happiness, and of heavenly happiness at the same time, the objects of supreme esteem, affection, and pursuit, is in the nature of things impossible. To attempt it, is to attempt to serve at the same time two masters of different, of opposite characters, and with different, opposite, interests. It is thus not only foolish and wicked to attempt, but it is impossible to accomplish, the conjoining of the service of God, or laying up treasures in heaven, and the service of mammon, or laying up treasures on earth.

But if the service of God is to be exclusively our business, if we are to seek for happiness, not on earth, but in heaven, if the attainment of this is to be our supreme object, if everything is to be subordinated, if everything is to be sacrificed to this, then what is to become of us, in reference even to the necessities of the present life, without which, we not only cannot exist in comfort, but cannot exist at all?

To meet this thought, which was very likely to rise in the minds of those who, dreaming of carnal happiness under a temporal prince on earth, were now told, that if they would share in the advantages of the Messiah's reign, they must seek a spiritual happiness, to be enjoyed in perfection in heaven, and that to the attainment of this, everything else must be sacrificed, our Lord adds the striking and beautiful statements which follow:—

“Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for

¹ Jay.

your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”¹

The particle “therefore” generally looks backward, and indicates that what follows it is an inference from what has gone before. Understood in this way, its import in the passage before us is—‘Since happiness in heaven ought to be the supreme object of your esteem, affection, and pursuit—since it is impossible at one and the same time, to make both earthly and heavenly things the principal subject of our thoughts, and the principal object of our affections—all anxiety even about what may be termed the necessities of life, must be at once improper and useless.’

In the New Testament, however, the particle here rendered “therefore,” sometimes looks forward, and indicates that the reason of what is said is just about to be given. In

¹ Matth. vi. 25-34.

this case it is equivalent to, 'For the reasons I am about to state, you ought not, while devoting yourselves supremely to the attainment of heavenly happiness, to be anxious about the supply of your earthly wants.' It is not a matter of much consequence, in which of these ways the import of the connective particle be here understood.

Food is necessary to the support of life—clothing, in most climates, is necessary to the comfort of life—and in many climates not only to its comfort, but to its continuance. Our Lord is plainly speaking of the necessities of the present life, and of the temper which his disciples, who were laying up treasures for themselves in heaven, should cultivate in reference to these necessities. That temper is briefly described in one word—"Take no thought"¹ about these things.

The English words, here, do not accurately convey the meaning of the original terms.² The necessities of life are, in ordinary cases, to be obtained either by bodily or mental labour; and in either case, a certain degree of thought must be exercised in reference to them. The simplest mechanical employment cannot be performed without, in some measure, "taking thought." The not taking thought about the proper means of providing for themselves and their families, is one principal cause of the vice and misery which prevail so extensively among mankind; and it is an important duty, in a Christian, to "provide for his own, especially for those of his own household," and to "provide things honest," honourable, respectable, "in the sight," in the estimation, "of all men." It was not our Lord's design to make men thoughtless, in any sense of the word.³

¹ "Μερίμνα must not be confounded with a well-regulated care for τὰ ἐνδεήματα τοῦ σώματος (James ii. 16), such a care being without μερίμνα."—THOLUCK.

² It is remarkable that the Vulgate, which the English and all the modern European versions all but slavishly follow, very happily translates the word here "soliciti sitis;" but, at verse 27, it strangely changes the rendering for "co-gitans." The English translators have taken the wrong translation, and kept by it. It is a very just remark of Chrysostom, οὐ ταῦτά ἐστι μερίμνα καὶ ἐργασία. Carefulness and diligence are not the same thing.

³ 1 Tim. v. 8. Rom. xii. 17.

The word translated, "Take no thought," properly signifies, "Be not anxious." "Be not overwhelmed with perplexing cares, and painful fears. While making the attainment of heavenly happiness your great object, and subordinating everything to this, indulge no unbelieving doubts—no harassing cares—no tormenting fears—with regard to the obtaining what is necessary for the present life.' Our Lord does not forbid, here, what his apostles elsewhere enjoin—the use of lawful means to obtain for ourselves, and those who depend on us, the necessities of life—nor that exercise of thought which is requisite for this purpose; but he does forbid us, while we use these means, or after we have used these means, to be anxious and fearful as to their being effectual for the purpose for which they are intended.

"Be not anxious for your life," for what is necessary for the support of life—that is, food—"what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink." "Be not anxious for your body," for what is necessary for the comfort of your body,—that is, clothing,—“what ye shall put on.”

Our Lord's meaning is not—what the words taken by themselves might mean—'Do not allow food and dress to occupy many of your thoughts,' though I may be allowed to remark, by the way, that for any person to do so, is to act a part not only incompatible with genuine Christianity, but unworthy of a rational being. Such conduct is contemptible as well as criminal. But our Lord's meaning is,—'When, in prosecuting your great object—the heavenly happiness—the attainment of the necessities of life for yourselves and your families may seem to be difficult or even impossible, be not anxious; God will provide for you. He has given you life; He has given you a body; and, while it is his will that you should continue to possess this life, and this body, he can and will take care of them. "Is not the life more than meat, and the body more than raiment?"

'He *can* take care of you. Surely he who gave life can give food; surely he who gave you a body can give you

clothing for that body. To give life, is obviously more difficult than to give food ; to create a body, is obviously more difficult than to furnish clothing for it. He who has done the greater, can do the less.'

'But he not only *can*, he *will*. To give life, is a far greater favour than to give food ; to give a body, than to give clothing. Is not the breath of life a more valuable blessing than the bread of every day ; is not the formation of the body a greater favour than a garment for its covering. He who has given the more valuable blessing, will not withhold the less.'

Food is necessary for the prolongation of life—clothing is necessary, in ordinary cases, to the body's health and activity. While God means you to live, he will furnish you with food ; while he means your bodies to be employed in his service, he will furnish you with clothing ; and when he sees fit that your mortal life should terminate, you will have no more need of food ; and when he separates your bodies from your souls, they will no longer have need of clothing.

The power of God, as manifested in giving you life and bodies, makes it evident that he can provide you with food and clothing ; and his kindness and wisdom, manifested in giving you life and bodies, make it evident that he will provide you with these necessities, so long as you stand in need of them.

Our Lord now proceeds to point out somewhat more in detail, the unreasonableness of anxiety, with respect either to life or to the body, to food or to raiment.

And first, with regard to life or food :—"Behold the fowls of the air, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns ; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them : Are ye not much better than they ?"¹ Nothing can be more beautiful in description, nothing more conclusive in

¹ Hilary explains the fowls, of the unclean spirits ; the lilies, of the good angels ; and the grass, of the heathen destined to perdition !

reasoning, than this. Few things are more satisfactory to a reflecting mind, as evidence of the constant superintendence of a Being of infinite power, wisdom, and benignity, over the universe, than the unerring certainty with which the lower animals are directed to their proper food. Destitute of reason, unprovided with, and to a great extent incapable of, instruction, they are yet enabled, by what we call their instincts, to provide for their security, and to supply their wants with a foresight, regularity, and perseverance, which, in many cases, shame man's boasted intelligence.¹ To an enlightened mind, these instincts of animals appear just the settled regular way in which God supplies their wants.

The statements of the psalmist are as philosophical as they are pious:—"The eyes of all wait on God, and he giveth them their meat in due season. He opens his hand, and satisfieth the desire of every living thing." "The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. He giveth to the beast his food, and to the ravens that cry."²

It is probable that our Lord borrowed this illustration from what was before the eyes of his audience: 'Look at these birds, now flying in your sight, how active, how healthy, how cheerful they are! How free from care, and fear, and, though incapable of providing for themselves, how well, how surely, are they provided for! Your heavenly Father feedeth them; are ye not his creatures? shall he not also care for you? nay, are ye not better, much better than they, and shall he not much more feed you?'

The question, Are ye not much better than they? admits of a twofold interpretation. The words, taken by themselves, might mean, Have ye not greatly the advantage of them? They cannot sow, they cannot reap, they cannot gather into barns—you can. If the birds of the air are supported, without any means used by themselves, is it not

¹ Brewster.

² Psal. civ. 21; 27; cxlv. 15, 16; cxlvii. 9.

reasonable to expect, that he who has qualified you for employing suitable means for securing your support, will render the use of these means effectual by his blessing? This is a good argument, but it does not seem to be our Lord's.

The question, viewed in its connection, is obviously equivalent to, 'You are much better than they: as men, you occupy a far higher place in the scale of being. You are creatures of a nobler order than they, and designed for a higher destiny. You are created in God's image—you are acknowledged as "his offspring." He has taught you more than the beasts of the field, and made you "wiser than the fowls of heaven."' ¹ And if we consider our Lord as addressing those who are laying up treasures for themselves in heaven, the argument is still more forcible, as such persons are the objects of his peculiar love; and he has bound himself by promise that they shall want no good thing. 'Will the God who cares for and feeds these birds, overlook you, and allow you to perish for want of food?'

The twenty-seventh verse is an argument against anxiety about our life, drawn from the utter powerlessness of anxiety to prolong life. It does not wear this appearance to an English reader; and, I am sure, the more intelligent among you must often have wondered, in reading this verse, what bearing the statement it seems to contain has on our Lord's exhortation, which he is enforcing,—“Be not anxious about your life.” With the exception of children, in the very dawn of reason, there are few people anxious about extending their stature; and it is not easy to see, how the incapacity of persons, by anxiety, to increase their height—a thing very little connected with their happiness in any way—is a reason why they should not be anxious about what is absolutely necessary for the continuance of their life. A cubit too is out of proportion; for it is plain our Lord's design called for the mention of a very

¹ Acts xvii. 28. Job. xxxv. 11.

minute increase. He is a tall man who is four cubits high. The addition of a cubit, even to a dwarf, would make him a giant. The truth is, the word rendered "stature," signifies also "age," or length of life.¹ I shall give you an example or two of this use of the word:—"But by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age, ask him; he shall speak for himself. Therefore said his parents, He is of age, ask him."² "Through faith also Sarah herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised."³ I have little doubt that this is its meaning here, and that our Lord's question, rendered literally, is, 'Which of you, by your anxiety, can add a cubit to his age, or life?'

'A cubit of time' seems to us a very odd expression, though it is to be found in an old Greek poet, to denote a very short space. It is by no means uncommon for us to apply measures of length to time, and to human life particularly. We speak of the *span* of human life, and of lengthening or shortening that span:—"Behold," says the psalmist, "thou hast made my days an handbreadth."⁴ Human life is often, in the classical poets, represented as a thread spun by the Fates, the cutting of which is the terminating life.⁵

Our Lord's meaning, then, seems to be, Which of you, by anxiety, can add to your life a single hour? Understood thus, these words contain a strong argument why we should not be anxious about life or food. It serves no purpose; no anxiety of ours can protract life. If we cannot, by all our anxiety, secure that object, for which a supply of food is chiefly desirable—the lengthening out of life—why should

¹ *Alania*. Erasmus. ² John ix. 21, 23. ³ Heb. xi. 11. ⁴ Psal. xxxix. 5.

⁵ Tholuck rather thinks the image is borrowed from life conceived as a race course.—Job ix. 25. ² Tim. iv. 7. A cubit bears a small proportion to a race course.

we be anxious for that which is valuable, only because it is fitted to gain this object? As long as it is the will of the Most High that you should remain in life, and be possessed of its comforts, he will render your endeavours effectual to provide for your wants. But when the hour comes when he has determined that you shall cease to live, all your anxieties will not protract your life a single moment. Though you had all the means of life in abundance, they would not, in these circumstances, in the slightest degree avail you.¹

Our Lord now goes on, by a similar illustration, to show the uselessness of anxiety about clothing:—"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon, in all his glory, was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"²

Here, as in the former case, our Lord seems to have drawn his illustration from objects which presented themselves to the senses of his audience. Turning their attention to the green earth on which they sat, enamelled with flowers of every hue, he says: "Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin." They neither practise the labours of husbandry, to procure the materials of clothing, nor engage in the processes of art, to form them into raiment, and yet they are clothed in garments of beauty, far surpassing anything which the wardrobe of royalty can display. Solomon—in the estimate of a Jew the most illustrious of sovereigns—Solomon, in all his glory—decked out in purple, and gold, and jewels—was not arrayed like one of these. "If God so clothe" such short-lived, and such comparatively useless vegetables; if God so clothe "the herbage of the field"—for the word rendered "grass"

¹ Brewster.² Matth. vi. 28, 29, 30.

signifies herbage generally, including the lilies of the field—the flowers which grow up among the grass; if God so clothe this herbage, “which to-day is” flourishing in all its beauty, and by to-morrow, “cut down” and withered, is employed as fuel—for, in Eastern countries, where fuel is scarce, herbage is often employed to heat the ovens and baths—“shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?”¹

These words require no explication. From the application, “O ye of little faith,” it is obvious that our Lord’s address was made to those who were in a state of mind like that of Nicodemus, when he came to Jesus by night—persons disposed to admit his divine mission, yet afraid of the consequences of acknowledging this, and delivering themselves entirely up to be guided by him—disposed to lay up treasures in heaven, yet not quite sure about abandoning all hope of the treasures on earth, which they had long so fondly anticipated. It is as if our Lord had said, ‘Why should you, while seeking the heavenly happiness, be anxious about worldly happiness? You are secured of all you need in this world: he who feeds the birds can, and will, feed you; he who clothes the lilies can, and will, clothe you.’

“Therefore take no thought,” that is, be not anxious, “saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek;) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”²

In these words, our Lord gives two additional reasons

¹ The lily, with us usually white, in the east more frequently red, orange, and yellow, grows there in the open field. The broad and fertile pasture-lands of the plain of Sharon were covered with that flower. It grows wild—it soon withers. The splendour of the dress of the flower is the more striking, the more its existence is precarious. Let the reader only think of the east, where a wind from the south often makes everything fade in twenty-four hours. Horace calls the flower ‘breve lilium.’—CARM. i. 36, 16. Jerome’s note on Lam. v. 10, illustrates this passage: “Solebant furni incendi non tantum ramalibus arborum, sed et floribus, postquam exaruerunt, quemadmodum et paleo et lilio.”

² Matth. vi. 31, 32.

why they should not be thus anxious. Such anxieties were characteristic of the heathen. They had very obscure and incorrect views of the Divine character and government. Some of them believed that all was fixed by fate; others, that all was left to chance. The one considered the gods themselves as subject to fate; the others thought that they took no interest in the concerns of mortals. With such views, how could they trust in these gods? Of a future world, they had no distinct knowledge. This world was everything to them, and it was not wonderful that they should be anxious about obtaining its necessities and comforts, and making the most of them all.¹ But it is unworthy of a Christian to be distinguished by a mode of thinking and feeling which is emphatically heathenish.

The other additional reason is, "Your Father knows that ye have need of these things." He has made us; he knows our frame; and if we regard him as our Father, who, we know, is able to bestow them, can we imagine that they shall be withheld from us, when he knows that we need them?

"But,"—that is, 'instead of being anxious about these things,'—"seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."²

"The kingdom of God," is the new spiritual economy. To seek it, is to make the attainment for ourselves and others, of the holy spiritual happiness which it secures to all its genuine subjects, our great object, to lay up treasures for ourselves in heaven. The "righteousness of God," is obviously neither the justice of the Divine character, nor the Divine method of justification, but the righteousness of the kingdom required by God: that righteousness which far exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. To

¹ "The leading feature of heathenism, according to Göthe in his *Life of Winkelman*, is 'living for the present;' or, as Chrysostom expresses it—*Τὰ ἴθνα, ὡς ἡ σῆμα ἔσται παρὰ τὸν παρόντα βίον, ὡς λόγος εὐδοκίᾳ τῶν μάλιστα, εὐδὲ ἵκονα τῶν εὐγενῶν.*"—THOLUCK.

² *Matth.* vi. 33.

seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, is to make the attainment of that holy happiness for ourselves and others, which is to be perfected in heaven, and the cultivation of that spiritual religion and morality, which is indissolubly connected with this holy happiness, our great, our principal business, to which everything else is to be subordinated, to which everything else is to be sacrificed.¹

In doing this, everything really necessary and useful shall be secured for you ; “all these things shall be added ;”² whatever is really good for you, you shall receive. “The Lord is a sun and shield ; he will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly. Godliness is profitable for all things ; having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come. All things shall work together for our good.”³ You shall have food and raiment, of the kind, in the degree, and during the period, which seems meet to your Father in heaven, who knows what is really good for you, who loves you, and who has power to do whatever his wisdom sees to be for your benefit, and his parental affection disposes him to bestow on you. “It is indeed quite a possible thing, that one who seeks first the kingdom of God, may perish of hunger from want of food, or from cold from want of raiment. In this case, it must just be considered as the appointed manner of his death. He must die by some means or other, and his death by hunger or cold, would be no more an objection against the care of God over him, than his death in any other way. It is substantially the same thing, whether God take a man

¹ It is not improbable that *διακονία*, like *χάρις* and *ἐλεῖν*, is a general description of the kingdom of God, and that *καὶ* is exegetical. To seek the kingdom is to seek to promote the reign of God both in ourselves and in others. In that case, the sense is, in Fuller's words, “Take care of God's interests, and he will take care of yours.”

² 1 Kings iii. 11-13.—Solomon had riches and honour “added” to what he sought—“wisdom.” The kingdom is the great thing—all the rest is *προσθήκη*. Supplement “appendix,” as Bengel says, “vitæ et corporis, v. 25, ac potius regni.”—Luke xii. 32. 2 Tim. iii. 8. Matth. x. 30. Origen's paraphrase is good : “Seek the great things—the little things will be added ; seek the heavenly things—the earthly will be added.”

³ Psal. lxxxiv. 11, 12. 1 Tim. iv. 8. Rom. viii. 28.

out of the world by some disease, or by withdrawing the necessary supports of life; and we have no more cause to be anxious in providing against want, than in guarding against any other cause of death.”¹

Our Lord concludes this section of his discourse with these emphatic words:—“Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.”²

‘Be not anxious about future events. To-morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.’ These words are often considered as equivalent to, ‘When to-morrow comes, to-morrow’s necessities will be provided for. If new wants arise, new supplies will be furnished; if new difficulties occur, new direction will be granted. To-morrow will look after its own concerns; let to-day be devoted to to-day’s duty.’

This is excellent sense, but I cannot bring it out of our Lord’s words. The two clauses in this verse, according to the Hebrew idiom, express the same general idea. “To-morrow will care for the things of itself,”—is equivalent to—‘To-morrow will bring along with it its own anxieties.’ Do not then unnecessarily anticipate them. Every day has enough to do with itself; “sufficient to the day is the evil thereof.” Do not double the burden of to-day, under the idea of lightening the burden of to-morrow. The evils we apprehend may never arrive; but by anticipating them, we suffer as much from them as if they were present: or if they do arrive, by feeling them before they come, we, as it were, suffer them twice, and double our distress. Instead of anticipating future evils, let us perform present duty. Let us not perplex ourselves, especially with thinking about the probable events which may result from our “seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” Let us fearlessly obey God, and leave the consequences to him, certain that the path of

¹ Brewster.

² Matth. vi. 34. *Vide* “Howe on Thoughtfulness for the Morrow.”

duty is the path of safety ; and that in opposition to all contrary appearances, everything of a worldly kind that is really good for us, will be bestowed on us while thus engaged. Oh, how happy might we be, if we would but avail ourselves of the kind invitation. "Be careful"—be anxious—"for nothing : but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God." How exceeding great and precious is the promise that is connected with this invitation. "The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep you hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."¹

VI. DETACHED EXHORTATIONS.

MATTHEW VII. 1-12.

The great leading design of our Lord's sermon on the mount is still clearly recognisable. That was to show that his religion was something radically different from what passed for religion among the Jews, and that a man must undergo a thorough change of mind—he must "repent," he must be "born again," he must become "a new creature," if he would "enter into the kingdom of God." The whole frame of his thoughts and affections must be altered. Old things must pass away, and all things must become new. The idea which binds together the miscellaneous and apparently unconnected remarks contained in this section, is—"There is an essential difference, a strong contrast, between the character of a disciple of the Messiah, and the nominal religious character of that age"—between "the righteousness of the kingdom and that of the Scribes and Pharisees." The Pharisees were the sect which held the highest place in public estimation among the Jews for religion. It was the strictest sect of their religion ; and to be a Pharisee, or as strict

¹ Phil. iv. 6, 7.

and exemplary as a Pharisee, was about as high a character as, in the judgment of the great body of the Jewish people, could be given to an individual. But our Lord distinctly states that, unless a man's righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees, he can, by no means, enter into the kingdom of God. Nothing seems to have been more characteristic of the Pharisees than a very high esteem of themselves, and a malignant contempt of others. They "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and contemned others."¹ They were very sharp-sighted to other men's faults, and very dim-sighted, if not altogether blind, to their own; and they took credit to themselves for their severe judgments of others, as if these were evidences of their own piety and zeal. In this respect, as in almost every other, the character of a disciple of Christ must be the exact opposite of that of a disciple of the Scribes. The Pharisee was fond of judging, and rash and severe in judgment; tender to his own faults, and harsh to the failings of others. The Christian, on the contrary, with a far higher standard of judgment, was not to pronounce judgment on the state and character of men without being called to do so; and when called to do so, was to judge candidly, and as favourably as the circumstances would admit, influenced by that charity which "hopeth all things, believeth all things; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth"—more disposed to be a reformer of himself than a censor of his neighbours. Such is the conduct which our Lord enjoins and enforces in that portion of the sermon on the mount, at which, in the course of our exposition, we are now arrived.

§ 1. *With respect to judging others.*

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."²

¹ Luke xviii. 9.

² Matth. vii. 1-2.

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that this prohibition, like many others in our Lord's discourse, is not to be interpreted in its utmost latitude. The capacity of judging, of forming an estimate and opinion, is one of our most valuable faculties, and the right use of it one of our most important duties. "Why do you not of yourselves judge that which is right?" says our Lord. "Judge righteous judgment." If we do not form judgments as to what is true and false, good and evil, how can we embrace the one and avoid the other?

The judgments here referred to obviously respect personal actions and characters; and the command is as plainly addressed to the disciples of Christ as private individuals. It is one of the first duties of civil magistrates to form, and pronounce, and act on, just judgments respecting all matters which come before them for determination; and it is one of the first duties of ecclesiastical rulers to form judgments respecting all who apply for admission to the communion of the church, and, like Paul and Silas in the case of Lydia, to admit only those whom they "judge to be faithful," or believers; and also to censure and exclude those who disgrace their profession. It cannot be supposed that our Lord here forbids his disciples to form a judgment of the state and character of men from their avowed principles, and their visible conduct; for, in a subsequent part of this chapter, he directs them to judge by this rule.¹ We are to "have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness;"² but, in order to this, we must exercise judgment as to what are unfruitful works of darkness. We are to "withdraw ourselves from every brother who walks disorderly;"³ but, in order to this, we must judge as to what is disorderly walking. We are to "mark them that cause divisions and offences, and avoid them;"⁴ but to do this, we must judge what is calculated to cause division and offence.

When our Lord calls on his disciples not to judge, he calls on them not to be officious, rash, presumptuous, severe, or partial in forming their judgments, nor hasty in declaring them.

¹ Matth. vii. 20.² Eph. v. 11.³ 2 Thess. iii. 6.⁴ Rom. xvi. 17.

We are not to be officious in intermeddling with what we have no concern with—it is a Christian's duty to "mind his own business."¹ There are many subjects on which we are not called to have any judgment at all.

We are not to be rash in our judgments. Even when called to judge, we are not to decide till we have carefully examined the subject—"He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him."²

We are not to be presumptuous in our judgments, pronouncing on things beyond our reach—such as the views and motives of another, and acting as if our conjectures were infallible truths.

We are not to be severe in our judgments. We are surely not, as some people seem to think, bound to believe that an avowed infidel or an open profligate is a good Christian; but we are bound to put the best construction on doubtful actions; and never, without full proof, to trace apparently good actions to bad motives.

We are not to be partial in our judgments; we are not to condemn in one what we approve, or, at any rate, pass by, in others. We are not to condemn in our neighbour what we overlook in ourselves.

And as we are not to judge officiously, rashly, presumptuously, severely, or partially, so neither are we to be hasty in proclaiming our judgment. An official judge, whether civil or ecclesiastical, is commonly bound to declare his judgment. But a private individual should, in every case, have a very obvious call before he proclaims an unfavourable judgment. Indeed, I apprehend the command, "Speak evil of no man,"³ absolutely requires us steadily to avoid giving an opinion to a man's disadvantage, to any one but to himself, except when duty demands it. To be fond of judging savours of pride—to be prone to condemnation, savours of malignity. It is very difficult to obtain possession of all the materials that in any case are necessary to form a correct judg-

¹ 1 Thess. iv. 7.

² Prov. xviii. 13.

³ Tit. iii. 2.

ment; and to pronounce judgment without this, is to run the hazard at least of cruel injustice; what I hastily condemn, if I knew all I might only pity, perhaps approve. To pronounce on motives and principles, is an invasion of His prerogative who searches the heart. In a being so liable to error himself, to condemn with rigour and apparent self-complacency, is unseemly and inhuman; and to be harsh and severe in their judgments of each other, is peculiarly unbecoming in those who must equally stand before the judgment seat of God, each one to give an account of himself; and all of whom, if strict justice is the only principle attended to, must be condemned in that judgment. Such seems to me the import of our Lord's words "judge not," and so reasonable and right is the prohibition they contain.¹

Our Lord expresses this prohibition by a most weighty consideration, "Judge not that ye be not judged." It is plain that the word "judge," is here, as in some other passages of the New Testament, equivalent to judge unfavourably, that is, to condemn. In the parallel passage in Luke, "Judge not that ye be not judged," is explained by "Condemn not that ye be not condemned."

Some have supposed that these words, and those that follow in the second verse, refer to what a man may expect in the ordinary intercourse of human life. One who is a severe judge of others, is likely to be severely judged by others. He who condemns very generally, is likely to be very generally condemned. But I do not think it at all probable, that in a discourse, one design of which is to show the spiritual character of christian morality, in contrast with the worldly character of pharisaic morality, a merely secular motive would be brought so prominently forward. It refers not to the judgments of men, but to the judgments of God; not to the judgments of time, but to the judgments of eternity.

We are not, however, to suppose that the idea is—'If you

¹ "Nolite judicare, sine scientia, sine amore, sine necessitate. Tamen canis pro cane, porcus pro porco, est habendus."—BENDEL.

are lenient in your judgments of your fellow-men, God will be lenient in his judgment concerning you. If you are severe in your judgments of your fellow-men, He will be severe in his judgments concerning you.' Whatever our judgments of each other may be, his judgment of us all will be according to truth. The sentiment seems to be this—'Beware of wrong judgments, especially false and hasty judgments, of your fellow-men, for all your judgments are to be reviewed, and by these judgments you are yourself to be then judged.' Not that the judgments we form of each other are to be the only, or the principal, test by which our character is to be tried and our doom fixed, any more than our words are to be the only test, though it is said, "By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned;"¹ but our judgments shall be one of these tests, and our words shall be another. 'Take care that your judgments be such as will bear judgment, for if they will not, they must lead to condemnation.'

"By what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; by what measure ye mete, it shall be measured out to you again." Your judgments of others shall afford materials for your being judged, and the measure you have dealt to others shall be employed, in part, as the ground of determining what measure should be awarded to you. It is just as if our Lord had said—'Judging is a serious matter, it brings after it fearfully important consequences.' What the Apostle James says of teachers, is true of judges:—"Be not many" judges, "knowing that ye shall receive the greater condemnation,"² or rather the severer judgment.

The impropriety of rash and severe judgments is peculiarly glaring in the case of those who are guilty themselves of the same or greater faults, than those which they censure in others. Most demonstrably is he inexcusable who "judges another if he himself do the same things." "In judging another he condemns himself."³ This is very strikingly

¹ Matth. xii. 37.

² James iii. 1.

³ Rom. ii. 1.

taught us by our Lord in the third, fourth, and fifth verses. "And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."¹

Let us first endeavour distinctly to apprehend the emblem, and then inquire into its meaning. Two men are represented as labouring under a disorder in the eye. Each has a disordered eye, but the one is much more severely affected than the other. The respective degree of disorder corresponds with the cause. The one has a mote,² or rather a splinter, a small portion of woody matter in the eye; the other has a much larger portion of woody matter, which, when compared with the other, may be termed a "beam,"³ or rafter. The one has a disordered eye; the other has one much more disordered. The sight of the one is slightly impeded; the sight of the other is all but destroyed. He who has the principal obstruction, instead of seeking to get rid of it, employs his almost extinguished vision in peering into his fellow's eye, and proposes to do, what would require a very perfect vision, to enable a person to do rightly—to extract the small, almost imperceptible, mote which is to be found there. Can anything be more preposterous and absurd? That is the emblem.

Now for its signification: A person is supposed to be characterised by some minor fault, it may be an irritable temper, or a talkative disposition. Another is distinguished by some decidedly immoral habit, intemperance, dishonesty, or falsehood. The last of these sets up to be the censor, and the reformer of the first. Can anything be more absurd than his fixing his attention on his neighbour's *infirmity*, while he turns away his attention from his own *sin*.

¹ Matth. vii. 3, 4, 5.

² *μάκρος*.

³ *δοκός*.

How would the murderer or the thief become the judgment-seat, especially if the pannels be tried for minor offences against mere statute law! How incongruous for satan, as an angel of light, to commence reproving the world for sin! ¹

But the thing is not merely incongruous and absurd. Such reprovers cannot, in ordinary cases, be at all successful. How can the man who is all but blind perform the delicate operation of removing a mote out of his neighbour's eye? To reprove for sin, with effect, requires, on the part of the reprover, that the sarcastic proverb should be inapplicable,—“Physician, heal thyself.”² A mind under the influence of gross sin, has its spiritual perspicacity obscured, and its spiritual sensibility blunted. Such a person is no fit judge on moral subjects, and is peculiarly unqualified for acting the part of a censor of the minor faults of temper and conduct. His opinions are not likely to be correct; and few people will be disposed to value them, at any rate, just because they are his opinions.

The course for such an individual, if he will reprove, and wishes to do so with success, is perfectly plain. First, let him get free of his intemperance, or dishonesty, or falsehood, and then let him try to cure his neighbour of irritability or loquacity. While he acts otherwise, he proves himself a “hypocrite”—a stage-player—the actor of a fraud. He pretends to be zealous in the extreme for religion and morality, while he is living in the neglect, or in the violation, of its plainest laws. The caustic remonstrance of the Apostle Paul, in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, precisely suits such characters, which, alas, are to be found in our days as well as in those of our Lord and his apostles. “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in dark-

¹ Brewster.

² Luke iv. 23.

ness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?"¹ "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds."²

We must not conclude from this passage, that it is not our duty to reprove sin, of whatever form or aggravation, and to endeavour to rid our neighbours of every moral infirmity. It is our duty "not to suffer sin on our brother, but surely to rebuke him." Even that brother, who has acted so disorderly, as that we are not familiarly to associate with him, we are not to count an enemy, but to admonish as a brother. But we are taught by it that the indulging in any sin unfits us for the discharge of this duty, and that if we would be useful as reprovers, we must endeavour to keep our "conscience void of offence towards God and towards man."³

This instruction is peculiarly applicable to ministers. The remarks of Mr Scott are weighty and powerful. "How unfit must unconverted men be for the ministry, yet how many such enter into that arduous office, and attempt to take motes out of the eyes of others, without considering the

¹ Rom. ii. 17-23.

² Rom. ii. 3-6.

³ "Ergo tacebimus et neminem omnino corripiemus? Corripiamus plané, sed prius nos. Proximum vis corripere: nihil est tibi te ipso propinquius."—AUGUSTIN.

beam that is in their own eye. The ministers of Christ must rebuke with all authority. It is peculiarly necessary, therefore, that all who aspire to that office, should cast out the beam out of their eye, before they attempt to pull the mote out of their brother's eye; and all engaged in the work should be very careful not to expose themselves to the retort,—‘Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.’ It should, however, be observed, that a discernible mote in a man's eye, does not disqualify him from casting out a beam out of another man's eye: Yet many harden themselves in gross sins, or wholly neglect the cautions and reproofs of these ministers, because they see that they also are liable to imperfections.”

§ 2. *With regard to Instruction and Reproof.*

The sixth verse is one of those passages which are somewhat obscure, not because we cannot perceive their meaning, but because we cannot fix their reference. “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.”¹ The literal meaning of these words is obvious. ‘It is an incongruous and foolish thing to give the sacred food of the priests,—the flesh which has been sanctified by being laid on the altar of God,—to dogs, unclean animals, which, after devouring it, may very probably turn on you and rend you; or to lay pearls, beautiful and precious as they are, before swine, which, totally incapable of estimating their beauty or their value, will trample them under their feet.’²

¹ Matth. vii. 6.

² This interpretation goes on the principle that there is here an instance of the figure termed “hysteresis,” according to which, of two verbs coupled together, the first relates not, as usual, to the first of the two preceding nouns, but to the second, and the second verb to the first. It is, however, not unnatural to refer both the verbs to the “swine:” for the wild sow is a ferocious animal, and is likely not only to trample a pearl under its feet, but, disappointed in not finding in it something to eat, to *turn*, and, by a side snatch, wound and rend the unwise giver. The “turning” is picturesque. “*Verres obliquum meditans*

Some have supposed that these words have no connection with what goes before, but are a general advice given to the apostles, as teachers, not to obtrude their instructions on those impious persons, who clearly show that the only effect would be to drive them to greater extremities of impious madness and outrageous blasphemy. There can be no doubt that such was the duty of the apostles, and they acted accordingly:—"But when the Jews saw the multitude, they were filled with envy, and spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming. Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles."¹ "And when they agreed not among themselves, they departed, after that Paul had spoken one word, Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers, saying, Go unto this people, and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and not perceive: for the heart of this people is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed; lest they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it."²

But there is nothing to lead us to think, that these words have any exclusive reference to the apostles. They seem naturally connected with what goes before. We are not only to take care that we be qualified for reproving, but that the persons we reprove be such as there is at least some probability of our reproof not being worse than lost

ictum."—HORAT. "Obliquo dente timendus aper."—OVID. The pearl is mentioned not only for its preciousness, but, as the learned Jesuit Maldonatus remarks, for its resemblance to the acorn on which the sow feeds. A semicolon put after "dogs," brings out the sense.

¹ Acts xiii. 45, 46.

² Acts xxviii. 25-28.

on. There are persons who, like Nabal, are such sons of Belial, that a man cannot speak to them.¹ Warning, reproofs, or counsels, are resented, as if they were injuries and insults. Such men are so enraged at them, that they not only trample them under foot, but they are ready to turn again and tear their friendly reprover. In the case of reproof, "wisdom is profitable to direct," and to show the proper medium between sinful timidity, and foolish rashness.

The dog has been considered as the emblem of the profane persecutor, the sow of the impure lover of sensual indulgence. Whatever there may be in this, the general character of the persons referred to is, that they cannot be reproved without the hazard of subjecting both truth, and him who speaks it, to outrage.²

It is plain, from this passage, that there are such persons as are no proper subjects of reproof. It may injure, but it cannot do them good, while they are in their present temper: we may weep for such persons in secret, we may pray for them, we may warn others against them, but we cannot, with advantage to them, and without danger to ourselves, reprove them.³ Let us, my brethren, cherish another spirit. Let us receive with gratitude the reproof of pious friendship. It is one of the most certain tests of true friendship. Many, who call themselves our friends, do not love us so well and so wisely as to reprove us, even when we need reproof. The proper temper, when reproof is needed and received, is that expressed by the psalmist:—"Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil."⁴ "As an ear-ring of gold, and an ornament of fine gold; so is a wise reprover upon an obedient ear."⁵

¹ 1 Sam. xxv. 17.

² Το ἄγριον has been interpreted of church fellowship. Τα ἄγρια ἄγρια was the cry of the deacons in the ancient church, before the communion.

³ "The witness for the truth must needs be zealous and courageous, but he need not be (he ought not to be) imprudent or indiscreet."—NEANDER.

⁴ Psal. cxli. 5.

⁵ Prov. xxv. 12.

§ 3. *With regard to Prayer, as the means of obtaining Blessings.*

The object of our Lord, in that beautiful paragraph which follows, is, I apprehend, to show his hearers how the righteousness, without which a man cannot be a subject of the Messiah's kingdom—the righteousness, so far superior to that taught by the Scribes, and exemplified by the Pharisees—was to be obtained.¹ If an obedience, so spiritual and so extensive, be necessary in all who would enter into the kingdom of God, can any of the family of frail and depraved man ever become its citizens? “Who is sufficient for these things?” How shall conformity be obtained to that law of the Messiah, which forbids an opprobrious word, a malignant wish, an impure desire, a revengeful thought—which requires a devotion so rational, so spiritual, so unostentatious—which demands the entire surrender of the whole man, obedience the most implicit, submission the most profound? To these questions, which must naturally have arisen in the minds of our Lord's hearers, the answer is to be found in the words before us. “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?”²

In order to ‘do good things,’—conformity to the laws of the Messiah,—we must obtain ‘good things,’ that is, as it is explained in our Lord's discourse on the same subject, recorded in the eleventh chapter of Luke, we must receive

¹ This is the view of the connection given by Chrysostom and Luther.

² Matth vii. 7-11.

“the Holy Spirit,” the enlightening, enlivening, guiding, strengthening, comforting, influences of the Holy Spirit, from our heavenly Father; and, if we would obtain these good gifts, which are absolutely necessary to the right discharge of our duty as Christians, we must seek them by frequent, fervent, persevering prayer; and, if we do thus seek them, we shall assuredly find them, and in them we shall find the effectual means of being all that the law of the kingdom of God requires us to be—of doing all that the law of the kingdom of God requires us to do. Such, I apprehend, is the general design and meaning of this very interesting passage.

What lies at the foundation of the whole train of thought, is the principle, that the Holy Spirit—that divine influence which, in the economy of salvation, is always represented as exerted on the mind by the Holy Spirit, the divine person who, along with the Father and the Son, exists in the unity of the Godhead; that this divine influence is absolutely necessary, in order to man’s yielding obedience to the law of the kingdom of God, and exemplifying that righteousness which exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.

Just views on this subject are of the last importance. Man labours under no such inability to obey the spiritual and exceeding broad law of the kingdom of heaven, as can lay any foundation for excusing him from obedience, or for vindicating, or apologising for, his disobedience. No physical faculties different from, or superior to, those possessed by men in their present state, are at all requisite in order to that obedience which the law of the new economy requires. Its first requisition is faith in Christ, or a belief of the testimony which God has given us concerning his Son. To believe this testimony, no other faculties are necessary than to believe any other testimony. The testimony is a plain statement, which any man possessed of reason may understand; and a statement, accompanied by such evidence, that any man, who makes a right use of his reason, must believe.

And all the other requisitions of the law of Christ are equally reasonable, as this primary and fundamental one. There is not one of them that man is unable to comply with, if he were but disposed to comply with it. Examine carefully all the particular injunctions of the law of the kingdom, contained in the preceding part of this discourse on the Mount, and say if there be one of them, that a man can reasonably refuse to obey, on the ground that it is physically impossible; that is, on the ground on which the lame man might justly refuse to obey a command to run a race, or the blind man to read a book, or the dumb man to make an oration. The law of the kingdom is a just law; it requires of man nothing that is impossible—nothing that should be difficult—nothing but what is practicable—nothing but what ought to be easy.

But while this is truth, and not only truth, but most important truth, which ought to be “affirmed constantly,” as that which alone affords firm footing for establishing in the conscience a charge of guilt against the man who neglects or refuses to yield obedience to this law, yet it is not less certainly true, and it is of equal importance, that this should be distinctly stated, that man, left to himself, never will yield obedience to the law of the kingdom, never will be what he ought to be, never will be brought to do what he ought to do. Human nature, as it now exists, left to the operation of its own propensities and impulses, as called forth by the objects and events of the present world, is so utterly indisposed to that mode of thinking, and feeling, and acting, prescribed in the law of the kingdom, that it is just as certain as the operation of any of the physical laws of nature, that it will never be conformed to that law. There is nothing to prevent any man, to whom the claims of the new dispensation and its author are presented, from complying with these claims, but his own depravity, his own carnal mind, his own wicked heart; but that depravity, that carnal mind, that wicked heart, will, if not counteracted and over-

borne by an opposite influence, most certainly prevent him from complying with these claims.

It is this depravity—this depravity alone—which renders such an influence as we are speaking of necessary; and it does render such an influence absolutely necessary. To the question, Can man do any, can man do all, of the things which our Lord here enumerates, as included in the righteousness of the kingdom? the true answer is, He can: who, what hinders him? To the question, Will man, left to himself, do all, or any, of these things, in the manner in which they are required to be done? the answer is, No; he will not, “For his carnal mind is enmity against God;” “His depraved heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.” This spiritual, moral weakness or inability, is man’s calamity, but it is also his fault—it is guilt as well as misery. It thus affords no shield from the fearful denunciations of righteous vengeance for wilful transgression; but it does render us absolutely dependent on divine influence, in order to our obtaining that righteousness, without which no man can enter into the kingdom of heaven—that “holiness, without which no man can see the Lord.”

To yield obedience to these commandments, all right and reasonable as they are, we must receive “good things,” “good gifts,” “the Holy Spirit,” from our Father who is in heaven; and this is one of the great characteristic excellences of the new economy, that it is “the ministration of the Spirit”¹ to men. It makes known to us “the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”² If it includes in it, by far the clearest, and the most extensive, revelation of the Divine will, as to what men should be and do, it also includes in it the revelation of the efficient means of making them what they should be, and enabling them to do what they should do.

The atoning sacrifice of Christ was intended to open a channel through which this influence might find its way to

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 2.

² Rom. viii. 2.

man, in a manner consistent with the holiness of the Divine character, the honour of the Divine law, the stability of the Divine administration. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law," by becoming "a curse" in our room, "that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith,"¹ that is, the promised Spirit by believing. And while the atonement of Christ thus opens up a way for the communication of that divine influence which is necessary to induce man, in his present state, to yield true, acceptable, obedience to the law of Christ, it forms a part of the new economy that the communication of this influence is usually made in answer to prayer.

From its very nature as *divine* influence, it can be obtained only from God, and there is an obvious propriety in the arrangement, that he who needs this influence should ask it of him who has it, and who is always far more ready to bestow it, than we are ever desirous of receiving it. Hence, says our Lord to those who, on hearing his illustrations of that righteousness which so far transcends the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, and without which, no man can be a citizen of the kingdom of God, might be disposed to say, "How shall we work this work of God?"—"Your heavenly Father will give good things, he will give the Holy Spirit to them who ask him." "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened." If you would be citizens of the kingdom of heaven, you must have the righteousness of the kingdom. If you would have the righteousness of the kingdom, you must have the Holy Spirit; if you would have the Holy Spirit, you must ask him from your Father in heaven, and if you ask him from your Father who is in heaven you shall most assuredly obtain him.

¹ Gal. iii. 13.

In order to your thus asking this Holy Spirit, whose influence is at once absolutely necessary and abundantly sufficient, to your obtaining the righteousness of the kingdom, do you not see most clearly, that a faith of the truth with regard to the fatherly character of God is essentially requisite; a belief that he is "rich in mercy," "ready to forgive," that he is "in Christ reconciling the world to himself"—His Father, and our Father; his God and our God; who has "not spared his own Son but delivered him up for us all, and who, with him, will assuredly give us all good things," if we will but give him credit for the kindness which is in his heart, and which he has proved to be there, and show this by asking him, "nothing doubting," for the blessings which he has promised to bestow? There cannot be acceptable prayer for divine influence, nor, indeed, for any blessing, where this faith of the truth respecting the fatherly character of God is wanting.

But then, why should it be wanting in any of us? Has not God given us most satisfactory evidence that he is our Father—our loving, forgiving Father, after all our most unnatural and wicked behaviour? and why then should any of us not say "Abba Father."

The first communication of divine influence is not in answer to our prayers, but in answer to the prayers of him whom the Father heareth always. The first communication of divine influence is not to faith, and the prayer of faith. It produces faith, and leads to the prayer of faith. But in the economy of grace, the established order is, and it is plainly founded on the reason of things, on what is true and right, that further communications of divine influence are granted in answer to believing prayer, are communicated to him who, feeling his want, comes to Him who alone can supply it.

The words "ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you"—require little explanation. Three different words are employed to designate

prayer, "ask," "seek," "knock;" and three different corresponding words are employed to describe the answer of prayer, "ye shall receive," "ye shall find," "it shall be opened." This triple representation obviously teaches us the high importance of the sentiments here taught, which are these, that the divine influence necessary in order to our yielding obedience to the law of Christ, is not to be expected without prayer; and that by prayer this influence will most certainly be obtained.

There is something like a climax in the phraseology—"seek," seems stronger than "ask," and "knock," than "seek."¹ It is probable that our Lord means thus to intimate, that to secure those aids of the Holy Spirit, which are absolutely necessary to the formation of the christian character, and the performance of christian duty, our prayers must be frequent, fervent, persevering, we must be "instant in prayer," we must "continue to be instant in prayer," we must "pray and not faint."²

The injunction to frequent, fervent, persevering prayer for the good gifts of the Holy Spirit, which are at once absolutely necessary, and completely sufficient, to enable us to yield obedience to the law of the new economy, is enforced by the declaration—"For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

These words may be considered as a statement of the general truth—That asking is the natural means to be employed if we would receive, seeking if we would find, knocking if we would have the door opened. 'In religion use the means you would in ordinary life: if you wished for a favour from your father would you not ask it?—if you needed something you had lost would you not seek for it?—if you wished

¹ "Operose quidem, tria ista quid inter se differant, exponendum putavi, sed longe melius ad instantissimam petitionem omnia referuntur.—*AUGUSTIN. Ennar. in Psal. cxviii. (cxix.) 48.*

² Rom. xii. 12. Luke xviii. 1.

the door opened would you not knock at it? Use your common sense in religion as in everything else, and if you do, you will abound in prayer.' This is fitted to meet a common but absurd idea, that prayer is a meritorious exercise, a work by the performance of which we are to propitiate God, and secure his favour, instead of being the natural means of expressing our wants, and having them supplied. Prayer, or rather saying prayers, with very many who not unfrequently engage in it, is not at all the means of obtaining what they feel they need, and wish to obtain. They have often no feeling that they need, no wish to obtain, the things asked for in the words they utter. They are merely doing something which they have been taught to believe is right, pleasing to God, the neglect of which would interfere with their good opinion of themselves, and the performance of which keeps them on good terms with themselves, and makes their conscience comparatively easy as to their religious duties. What monstrous absurdity—what fearful impiety—is this! and yet this is the religion of a large body of men, who pass not only with others, but with themselves, for being religious!

Or, the words may be considered as an express promise that such prayers—prayers to our Father in heaven for good gifts, for the Holy Spirit—shall assuredly be answered; as if he had said, 'Rest assured that, if you use the appropriate means for obtaining the Holy Spirit, you shall not employ them in vain. He that asks shall receive; he that seeks shall find; he that knocks shall have it opened to him.'

From this passage, and a number of similar passages in the New Testament, ill understood, some have deduced the absurd principle, that we may have anything we please from God for the asking, if we but ask it in faith; and, asking in faith, in their estimation, is just working ourselves up to the persuasion, that we shall obtain what we ask. The passage before us teaches us no such absurdity. It teaches us, that if we

ask of God, as our Father in heaven, "good things," that is, "the Holy Spirit," to enable us to do his will, we shall not be disappointed. The other passages, often quoted in support of such irrational expectations, are equally ill fitted to serve that purpose. Whatsoever we ask "in faith," we are sure to obtain sooner or later; but we can ask nothing "in faith," without a reference to some Divine promise, in which the blessing we solicit has been pledged to us. To "pray in faith," is not to pray, expecting that God will give us whatever we may wish or ask, but that he will give us whatever he has promised us. The duty of praying in faith rests on the plain principle that, "if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us."

To encourage his hearers to apply to God for these good gifts of that Holy Spirit, which were at once necessary and sufficient in order to their exemplifying the righteousness of the kingdom, our Lord makes an appeal to their paternal feelings, and reasons from what an earthly father, with all his imperfections and faults, would, or would not do, to what might be expected from our all-perfect and all-beneficent Father in heaven:—"What man is there of you, whom, if his son ask bread,¹ will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give" the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?²

Parental affection, by the wise and kind arrangement of

¹ "It is more picturesque, and equally accurate, to render *ἄρτον*, a loaf: there is a similarity between a loaf and a stone. On the same principle, *ἄρτον*, in Matth. iv. 3, should be rendered, loaves."—CAMPBELL.

² Matth. vii. 9-11.—We have a specimen—certainly not a favourable, and, taken by itself, not a fair, one—of patristic exegesis, yet one full of serious import to all, in these times of growing admiration of "ancient," not "primitive," Christianity, in the following passage from Augustine, "facile princeps" of the Latin fathers:—"The 'fish' means faith in the ocean billows of the present life; the 'bread' the nutritive power of love; the 'egg' is believing hope, which anticipates the future." What a refreshment to turn from these "aniles nugæ" to such a pregnant interpretation as that of Bengel—*Τὴν ἀρεσκίαν*, "ubi vera rogatio, ibi divina replicatio." See note F.

God, is one of the most powerful of all the active principles of the human mind. It is absolutely monstrous for a father not to supply the wants of his children, when he has it in his power : it were more monstrous still, not merely to refuse their entreaties for what is beneficial and necessary for them, but to give them, in its place, what is useless or noxious. He would justly be considered as a disgrace to the species, who could act in this way. Even though in many respects evil, though hard-hearted and close-handed in reference to others, fathers are commonly kind to their children. Their being fathers, in ordinary cases, secures kind treatment of their children.

Now, says our Lord, what may not be expected from the infinitely excellent and amiable Divinity towards those, in reference to whom he is pleased to take the appellation of Father ?¹ In knowledge, in wisdom, in kindness, in wealth, in liberality, our heavenly Father infinitely surpasses all earthly fathers ; and therefore we may ask him, with the absolute certainty of obtaining our request, that he would give us "good things," "good gifts," "the Holy Spirit." He knows that the Holy Spirit, in his saving influences, is as absolutely necessary for our souls, as food is for our bodies, and he never will, he never can, without denying his fatherly character, refuse this to those who ask him. This is most conclusive reasoning—most persuasive exhortation—well calculated to shame into annihilation the jealousies of guilt, the fears of unbelief ;² " And, is it possible that, after all this, we should ever feel reluctant to draw near to God ? Oh, what must be that alienation of heart, which can make light of such a privilege—that guilt and shame, which make it seem almost a duty to stand aloof—and that distrust of

¹ " This comparison is, in the highest conceivable degree, opposed to all pantheistical and deistical notions of the relations between God and creation."—NEANDER.

² " Though we had no motive or incentive to prayer, except this kind and precious saying, it should be enough of itself."—LUTHER.

God, which gives to our approach before him an appearance of presumption !”¹

It is plain, however, that this is an argument which can have no effect on a mind which does not believe the truth with regard to the fatherly character of God. So long as men look on God merely as a righteously displeased Judge, they cannot come to him “in the full assurance of faith.” They must believe his own declaration, that he is “The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty,”² who hath “set forth” his Son “to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God : to declare at this time his righteousness ; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus”³—“God in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, seeing he hath made Him who knew no sin, to be sin for us.”⁴

As I have already remarked, it is strange, after all that God has said and done, that there should be any doubt on that subject, among those to whom the word of the christian salvation has come. Has he not declared that “He willeth all men to be saved ?” Has he not sworn that “He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked ?” Has he not glorified his grace, in that he “hath not spared his Son, but delivered him up for us all ?” Is he not proclaiming, “Return to me, ye backsliding children, for I have redeemed you ?” “Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die ?”⁵ Is it not strange, that, after all this, we should doubt whether God be our Father ?⁶

¹ Fuller. ² Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7. ³ Rom. iii. 25, 26. ⁴ 2 Cor. v. 19.

⁵ 1 Tim. ii. 4. Ezek. xxxiii. 11. Rom. viii. 32. Jer iii. 22.

⁶ Calvin's words are beautiful :—“*Paternus amor vitium (et) averis superat, ut homines sui obliti se in filios plus quam liberaliter effundant. Unde autem est nisi quia Deus, a quo descendit omnis paternitas, particulam sue bonitatis*

Till we believe this—the love which God has to worthless, self-ruined man—till we know him, as “God in Christ, reconciling the world to himself,” our prayers cannot be the prayers of faith, and therefore cannot be acceptable; and the more clearly we perceive, the more firmly we believe, this truth, the more readily shall we go to God for the supply of all our need, and the more abundant evidence shall we have, in our own experience, that he indeed gives liberally, and upbraideth not. The reason of our being so destitute of the Holy Spirit, is not to be traced in any degree to the backwardness of God to confer the Holy Spirit, but entirely to our “not asking,” or to “our asking amiss.”¹ We thus arrive at the point to which, in all our illustrations of christian doctrine and duty, we so often find ourselves brought—the necessity of the faith of the Gospel. The importance of the knowledge and belief of the truth, respecting the character of God, as rich in mercy, ready to forgive—in other words, the faith of the Gospel—cannot be overrated. It lies at the foundation of all acceptable duty, of all true holiness, of all solid consolation, of all permanent happiness: “Lord, show us the Father;” “Lord, increase our faith.”

§ 4. *Comprehensive rule for relative duties, illustrative of the difference between the righteousness of Christians, and the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees.*

Interpreters have found some difficulty in apprehending and unfolding the connection of the beautiful practical maxim which follows, with what precedes it in our Lord's discourse. That there is connection, seems plain from the particle rendered “therefore;” but what that connection precisely is, it is not so easy to discover.

eorum cordibus instillat? Quodsi tantum ad beneficentiam valent guttulæ, quid ab ipso mari inexhausto sperandum est? An restrictus esset Deus, qui hominum corda sic aperit? Interea tenendum est illud Jesaiæ, ‘Etiam si mater filios ejus obliviscatur,’ Dominum tamen fore sui similem, ut se Pater semper exhibeat.”

¹ James iv. 3.

Some would connect it with what immediately precedes it, the command to ask, and seek, and knock, under the assurance that if we do so we shall receive, and find, and have it opened to us. The train of thought seems to them to be the following,—All unkind and injurious treatment of our fellow-men, is ultimately to be resolved into inordinate and mistaken self-love, an excessive attachment to worldly good in some form or other, and this has its root in ignorance and distrust of God. If we were seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and, in the faith that all other things would be added, asking, and seeking, and knocking, assured that we shall not ask, and seek, and knock in vain, then we should be freed from the inordinate desire of worldly good, freed from all inclination to covetousness or injustice,—confident of the care of the Lord our Shepherd, we should be anxious about nothing. But when, “like beasts of prey, we set off as it were to forage for ourselves, and learn to grudge at the good of our neighbours, when that seems in any way to interfere with our interest, and make it our great object to secure what we think useful or necessary to ourselves, though it should be at their expense—such conduct is utterly unworthy of those who are the children of our Father in heaven. Since we have one who knows what we need, who can give us what we need, who is disposed to do so, who has promised to do so, let us not conduct ourselves as those who are seeking a portion on earth for themselves, and who therefore scruple not to use the means that seem most likely to secure that for them, however much this may trench on the comforts, and rights, and interests of their fellow-men, but let us show our confidence in our heavenly Father, by treating all our fellow-men with that equity and kindness with which we could wish ourselves to be treated by them.”¹

This is ingenious, but it does not seem to me satisfactory.

¹ Fuller.

I am disposed to consider the words before us as not so much connected with what immediately precedes them, as with the general scope and purpose of the preceding part of the discourse. I consider them as a farther illustration of the difference of the righteousness of the kingdom from, and its superiority over, the righteousness taught by the Scribes and exemplified by the Pharisees. The word rendered "therefore,"¹ does not by any means necessarily imply that what follows is, strictly speaking, an inference from what goes before. It merely implies connection of some kind; it intimates, in the most general way, cohesion of thought, and might be rendered, "whatsoever then ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."²

The morality taught by the Scribes and exemplified by the Pharisees, seems to have been—'Do to others as they do to you—Love your neighbour, hate your enemy—Love them that love you, do good to them that do good to you—lend to them from whom you hope to receive again; and as to those who do you injuries, the rule is, an eye for an eye; a tooth for a tooth.' But our Lord, the great Legislator of the kingdom of heaven, gives forth a very different statute:—"Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets."³

Some excellent men, in their zeal for strict literal interpretation, have, I apprehend, entirely misconceived the meaning of this maxim of our Lord. They have considered him as saying, Every man is bound to do to or for another person, whatever he wishes that other person to do to or for him. This is, no doubt, the literal meaning of the words strictly interpreted; but the language is plainly what may be called proverbial or apothegmatical language,

¹ εἰ.
² Matth. vii. 12.

³ Neander considers the "εἰ" here as connecting this verse with verse 5, and that, in it, our Saviour gives a criterion to distinguish true from pharisaic righteousness."

which is very generally to be interpreted with limitations, not specified, yet obviously understood. To interpret it in the way proposed, is to deprive the maxim of the character of a general rule of conduct towards our neighbour, which it seems obviously intended to bear, and makes it a check on unreasonable expectation, instead of an injunction to equitable and beneficent conduct. Our Lord's design is to say, 'Be kind and just to all,' and to furnish men with an easy method of finding out, in any particular case, what the law of kindness and justness requires;—whereas this mode of interpretation makes him in effect say, 'Take care not to expect too much from your fellow-men, for your obligations will necessarily rise with your expectations.' Besides, the injunction, understood in this strict mode of interpretation, implies the gross absurdity, that if I wish another to do what is sinful, in order to gratify or serve me, I am bound to do what is sinful in order to gratify and serve him.¹

It is obvious that the words are to be interpreted with the latitude in which proverbial language is usually interpreted. They are to be understood with certain conditions and limitations. What these are, it is by no means difficult to discover. The words are equivalent to a command to do to others whatsoever we could in reason and justice wish them to do to us, on the supposition that our position to each other were reversed—that we were in their place, and they were in ours.

The limitations are plainly of two kinds,—first, such as rise out of the nature of the actions to be performed; and, secondly, such as rise out of the relative situation in which men stand to each other. It does not by any means follow, that I am bound to do, or to forbear from doing, anything to my-neighbour, merely because I may wish him to do, or to

¹ For many of the thoughts in the remaining part of the exposition of this verse, I am indebted to Dr John Evans' sermon on it, in his "Discourses on the Christian Temper"—one of the best books on christian ethics that we have.

forbear from doing, the same thing to me. I may wish my neighbour to violate the law of justice, or truth, or chastity, or temperance, to please me; but that is no reason why I should violate any of these laws to please him. I may be very well pleased that my neighbour should not reprove me for sin; but that is no reason why I should not reprove him for sin. My unreasonable and wicked wishes can surely never render conduct, in itself unreasonable and wicked, reasonable and right. It is only whatsoever is reasonable and right, which I wish from another, that I am bound to do to another.

The other limitation is just as easily drawn with distinctness. A father is not bound to do to his children the very same things which he reasonably expects from his children. A master is not bound to do to his servants the very same things which he reasonably expects from his servants. To say this were to confound all the relations of society. But a parent is bound to do to his child, what, if he were a child, he could reasonably expect from his father. A master is bound to do to his servant, what he, if he were a servant, could reasonably expect from his master. The maxim before us is plainly to be understood in the same way as the apostle's injunction to masters. After having stated the obligations of servants, he adds, "And, ye masters, do the same things unto them;"¹ that is, not precisely the same actions of cheerful and conscientious obedience, but, as they are bound to do their duty to you, you are equally bound to do your duty to them. Such is the meaning of our Lord's maxim—whatsoever you can reasonably expect from another, you are bound to do to another, were he in your place, and you in his.²

¹ Eph. vi. 9.

² Gibbon remarks, with a sneer, in reference to this maxim, "I read it in a moral treatise of Isocrates, four hundred years before the publication of the Gospel.—*Ἄ πάσχοιτε ὑφ' ἑτέρων ἐγγίξασθαι, ταῦτα τοῖς ἄλλοις μὴ ποιεῖν.*" It is finely said by Trench, "This is an old precept, as old as the creation itself, written originally on the heart of man; which, when men, fugitives from themselves,

No precept can be more obviously equitable than this. It is just requiring a man to act in every case according to what is reasonable and right. It is founded on the principle, that all are equally bound to regulate themselves by the dictates of sound reason and the law of God; and that, of course, whatever would be the duty of any one, in particular circumstances, to us, must be our duty to him, if he were in our circumstances, and we in his. The law of God—the reason of things—is immutable. Duty remains the same, though the individuals be different. Our changing places with our neighbour cannot alter the eternal obligations of truth and justice—cannot make that evil which before was good—cannot make that wrong which before was right—cannot destroy, cannot even lessen, the obligations of what was duty.¹ The thing is so plain, that, in illustrating it, I feel as if I were holding up a taper to enable you to see the sun.

The words of our Lord are not only a general summary of our duty to our neighbours, but they are a rule admirably fitted for enabling us, in particular cases, to discover and to perform this duty. The rule is this: Suppose yourself in the case of an individual, and then ask yourself what you would or might reasonably expect from him, were he to bear the same relation to you that you do to him. This is a rule easily understood, easily remembered, easily applied. The person of the most ordinary faculties and education can turn this rule to use, if he is but disposed. He has but to consult his own convictions and feelings:—How should I desire to be treated, if I were in the situation of this individual? What should I think my claims on an individual in my situation? It may be applied even on a sudden emergency, when we have no time nor opportunity for much consideration—when we are required immediately to act.

and from the knowledge of their own hearts, had lost the power of reading, Christ came in the flesh to read to them anew."—Exp. of the Sermon on the Mount, pp. 143, 144.

¹ Brewster.

It may well be said of this law, "It is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off: it is very near thee; it is in thy heart, that thou mayest do it."¹

This rule has this great advantage, it shows both what we should do, and what we should not do. It holds both negatively and positively. Though it wears only the positive form in the passage before us, we are as much bound not to do to others, what we would not have others to do to us; as to do to them what we would have them to do to us. To neglect to do what we would expect from others, is equally wrong in nature, though it may not be equally wrong in degree, as to do to them what we would not wish them to do to us.

As this rule is well fitted to be a universal directory, it may serve a good purpose to go a little into detail here. In the ordinary intercourse of life, our conduct ought to be regulated by this maxim. We ought to treat others with the same respect, courtesy, and kindness, as we would wish to be treated by them. We must not subject others to those slights and neglects, which, were we in their circumstances, and they in ours, we should feel to be undeserved and unpleasant. How much is the happiness of domestic life, and of general society, embittered by forgetting to apply this rule, even when none of the more obvious requisitions of truth, or equity, or even love, are violated. What a happy world would it be, if this were the great regulating principle of social intercourse!

In the management of the business of life, we cannot have a better rule. It would lead to the most exact justice in all our dealings. There would be no dishonest debtors, no hard-hearted creditors. The light weight, the scanty measure, the adulterated commodity, would be unknown. The rich would not take advantage of the necessities of the poor, nor the poor impose on the ignorance or good nature of the rich. What a vast number of practices, which obtain in common, and which, from their commonness, have ceased to be considered as improper, when touched as by the Ithuriel spear of this maxim,

¹ Deut. xxx. 11-14.

would start forth in all their moral deformity and loathsomeness.

It is not only fitted to guide us in matters of strict right, but also in claims made on our compassion and assistance. It would prevent the poor man from becoming, without absolute necessity, a burden on his wealthier neighbours, and it would prevent the wealthy from hardening his heart, and shutting his hand against his poor brother.

It is well calculated to show us our duty with regard to the reputation of our neighbours. It would not only prevent all malignant and false statements, but it would make men take heed how they take up and circulate a bad report respecting a neighbour. It would put down all busy intermeddling in matters which do not concern us, all speaking evil of another, even when he deserves to be spoken evil of, unless duty plainly calls on us to make the disclosure.

In the ordinary relations of life, this rule may be of the greatest use. Were husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants, often applying this rule, how full of peace and happiness would be the domestic scene! Husbands would love their wives, and wives love their husbands. Parents would not provoke their children to wrath, and children would not be disrespectful and disobedient. Masters would give to their servants the things which are just and equal, and servants would identify their masters' interests with their own. Governors would never be tyrannical, and subjects never turbulent.

I shall mention only one other case in which this rule, if honestly applied, would lead to the happiest results: I refer to differences in religious opinions. Had this principle been acted upon, persecution in all its forms would have been unknown. For where is the man who thinks that it would be right to punish him for his conscientious convictions, or for that conduct which is the necessary result of them? Religious controversies must be agitated so long as men differ in their views, and feel that truth is valuable; but they would

wear a very different aspect from what they do, were those who engage in them to act according to this golden rule. Imputation of unworthy motives, opprobrious language, personal abuse, malignant insinuations, with all the other poisoned weapons, with which the armoury of polemic discussion is so abundantly furnished, would be thrown aside for ever; and clear statement and fair argument take their place.

It is a peculiar excellence of this rule of our Lord, that it not only shows us our duty, but its obvious tendency is to persuade us to perform it. It brings duty before the mind in a peculiarly inviting form. It not only enlightens the mind, but inclines the heart. Self-love is the great obstacle in the way of our doing our duty to our neighbour. Our Lord makes even self-love become, as it were, the hand-maid of justice and charity. Having led us to change places with our neighbour, to feel what are our rights, and how unreasonable it would be to withhold them, he then says, These are his rights, and will you be the unreasonable person to deprive him of them; we are made, as it were, to declare what is our neighbour's due, when we supposed we were only considering what was our own; and we cannot, without the shame of conscious inconsistency, refuse to him what we clearly see, were we in his place, we should account it unreasonable and unjust to be deprived of.

Our Lord enforces this comprehensive precept by the declaration,—“For this is the law and the prophets.” “The law” here, is the Pentateuch,—the five books of Moses. “The prophets,” are the rest of the inspired books of the Old Testament. When our Lord says, “This is the law and the prophets,” he does not mean that the whole information contained in the Old Testament Scriptures, is summed up in this maxim, but he does mean that all which these divine books teach respecting the duty of man to man, is included in this maxim. Just as the apostle says, that

“love is the fulfilling of the law.”¹ He who does to all, in their various relations, that which he could reasonably expect from them, were their situation exchanged, has obviously performed all relative duties.

I think it not improbable, that our Lord meant to convey, too, this idea, ‘This is not the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, but it is the righteousness of Moses and the prophets.’

Let us examine ourselves. Have we conducted ourselves according to this rule,—this most righteous and reasonable rule? Who does so? Is not every one constrained to say, “who can understand my errors?” Does not every one feel how much has been wanting, how much wrong? Were we under no obligations to God at all, or had we strictly discharged them, our short-comings and wrong-goings, with regard to our neighbour, are enough to condemn us; “every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”² We need pardon. Pardon is to be obtained, and the faith of the same truth by which pardon is obtained, is the grand, the only effectual, cure of inordinate selfishness, and of making man both love God whom he has not seen, and his brother whom he has seen.

Let all who habitually neglect or violate this law recollect, that whatever be their profession, they are not Christians. Even now, Christ is saying to them, “Why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” And by-and-bye he will, if they remain in impenitence, say to them before an assembled world, “Depart from me, I never knew you, ye that work iniquity.”³

VII.—APPLICATION OF THE DISCOURSE.

MATTH. vii. 13-23.

The concluding verses of this chapter may be considered as the applicatory part of our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount.

¹ Rom. xiii. 10.

² Rom. iii. 19.

³ Luke vi. 46. Matth. vii. 23.

They are not to be viewed, as they very generally have been, as unconnected advices or statements, but they naturally rise out of the previous part of the discourse. One leading design of that discourse is to show the spiritual nature, and the wide extent, of that obedience which is characteristic of the true subjects of the Messiah, and which is absolutely necessary in order to the enjoyment of that state of ultimate blessedness which is provided for them—to show that the righteousness of the kingdom far exceeds “the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees.”

To Jews, who expected that they all were to be subjects of the Messiah, that all the descendants of Israel would, as a matter of course, be heirs of the kingdom, and who considered “the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees”—that system of religious and moral duty taught by the Scribes, and exemplified by the Pharisees—as fully embracing and answering all the requisitions of the Divine law, the statements of our Lord must have appeared hard sayings. It was natural for men, with these views, to say within themselves, Who then can be saved? This is indeed “a strait gate.” This is indeed “a narrow way.”

Our Lord, who often speaks to the thoughts of his audience, meets this state of mind by saying, in effect, ‘The gate is strait, the way is narrow, yet it is your wisdom, your interest, as well as your duty, to enter by that strait gate, to walk in that narrow way. There is, indeed, a wide gate, soliciting your entrance,—there is a broad path, inviting your steps to walk in it; and multitudes are passing through that gate, and walking along that way; but that gate is the gate of perdition, that road is the road to hell. The strait gate is the only gate of life, the narrow way is the only way to heaven. Few indeed, comparatively, enter by that gate, and walk in that way. But that is just an additional reason why ye should see that ye be among that little flock, for to them alone “is it the Father’s good pleasure to give the kingdom.”’

§ 1. *This is the only way of escaping perdition, and securing salvation.*

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”¹ These words consist of an exhortation, “Enter in at the strait gate,”—enforced by two considerations. “Enter in at the strait gate, for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction.” “Enter in at the strait gate, for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life;” that is, ‘Enter in at the strait gate, for the wide gate, through which so many enter, leads to destruction. Enter in at the strait gate, through which so few pass, for it alone leads to life.’²

To “enter in at the strait gate,” is to embrace those views of truth, and duty, and happiness, which our Lord unfolds, and of which we have an admirable specimen in this discourse; and to walk in the narrow way, is habitually to regulate our temper and conduct by these views. To embrace these views, is represented as entering through a strait gate, through which the person with difficulty presses, finding it impossible to take anything along with him, because these views are naturally, in the very highest degree, unpalatable to the human mind and heart, and cannot be embraced without a relinquishment of sinful pleasures, connections, pursuits, and interests—without that sacrifice of former habits of thought and feeling, which our Lord elsewhere represents as a man’s “denying,” renouncing, “him-

¹ Matth. vii. 13, 14.—The figure has been thought that of a narrow way, leading through a strait gate to a fortress or palace—eternal life. The similarity of this figure to that in the famous *πλάξ* of Cebes is striking:—*ὁνομαζόμενος θύραν τινὰ μικράν, καὶ ἰδόντι τινι πρὸ τῆς θύρας, ὅτις οὐ πολὺ ἐχλευίνεται, ἀλλὰ πάντῃ διὰ τὴν περικύρτου αὐτῇ λενὴν ἢ ἰδίαν, ἢ ἔργουσα πρὸς τὴν ἀληθεύοντα παιδείαν.* Bengel, however, seems right in his remark—“Πύλα, ponitur ante ἰδίαν.” The gate is the entrance; the way, the prosecution, of a religious course.

² The Hebrew repeated his *ו* when we would use *and*, especially in impassioned diction. See Gesenius, in which are cited as examples:—Isaiah vi. 5; i. 29, 30; iii. 1-6; ix. 3-5. Job iii. 24, 25; viii. 9; xi. 15, 16.—*Θεολογικ.*

self;" and the regulating our temper and conduct habitually by these views, is represented as walking in a narrow encumbered path, because this implies our steadily prosecuting a course of implicit faith in and obedience to our Lord and Master, whatever opposition, and whatever temptations, we may meet with.

Our Lord's exhortation is, 'Embrace these views, however opposite to preconceived opinion—follow this course, however inconsistent with your worldly interest. It is no doubt much easier, much more agreeable, to hold fast fondly cherished prejudices—to indulge natural propensities—to follow a course which promises to secure for you worldly honour, wealth, and pleasure. This is a wide gate, this is a broad unencumbered way. It is easy to enter on this way, and few obstructions are to be expected in prosecuting it. The transition from sin to sin, from occasional transgressions to habitual indulgences, is easy, and in this way you will be in no want of company. The old and the young, the rich and the poor, the learned and the unlearned, walk there. It is "the course of the world," in which all men naturally walk, "fulfilling the lusts of the flesh, and of the mind." But this path, inviting as it may seem, frequented as it is, is indeed ruinous. It "leads to destruction," it terminates in hell. "The end of these things is death." If you are wise, then, "Enter not in at this gate, walk not in this way."

The other course, however repulsive to natural inclination, is incomparably the more eligible one. "Enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life." This way of implicit faith and obedience certainly conducts to life, to true, satisfactory, permanent happiness. This is the onward way of well-doing, which leads to "glory, honour, and immortality." The glories and felicities in which it terminates, will far more than compensate for the sacrifices made in entering on it, and for the difficulties met with in prosecuting it.



To heighten the force of the motive, our Lord adds, "Few there be that find it." Comparatively few men are religious. Many neglect religion altogether—others rest in external forms and empty notions—others are deluded into some of those more soothing, flattering, fashionable species of religion, which satan, transformed into an angel of light, and his servants transformed into ministers of righteousness, propose to them when they are roused to a state of alarm in reference to the interests of their souls. They are deterred by the difficulties of entering through the strait gate, and walking along the narrow way; they are terrified at the idea of being counted precise and singular. They hope to get to heaven at an easier rate, and they do not know that this narrow way has its peculiar supports, and consolations, and joys, that far more than counterbalance its toils, and difficulties, and discouragements.¹

Stripped of its figurative dress, and expressed in plain language, our Lord's exhortation is,—'Be religious, by embracing my doctrine and obeying my law, for irreligion, in all its forms, necessarily ends in everlasting ruin, and vast multitudes in this way perish. Be religious, for religion is at once the only, and the certain, way to everlasting happiness; but ah, how few are there, comparatively, who in this way obtain this happiness.'

These awfully solemn words of our Lord are as applicable to us as they were to those to whom they were originally addressed. The two gates, the two ways, still stand before us,—the one leading to destruction, the other to life. The broad road, with all its endlessly diversified tracks of irreligion and false religion, apparently quite distinct, yet in reality all leading in the same direction, down to the chambers of eternal death, continues to be crowded by travellers. The narrow path, often beset with snares, often rugged with difficulties, but always onward and upward, continues to be

¹ Scott.

trodden by only a small and despised group of pilgrims. These are the only two paths, and one of them we must choose.

There has been always a very earnest wish—a very eager endeavour—to avoid the necessity of making this choice, by joining the two roads into one, or by forming a third road which should have the recommendations of both,—or, at any rate, by so combining them, as that the traveller may have the comforts of the broad path during his journey, and the safety of the narrow one at its close. Men would fain escape the pains of self-denial here, and of hell hereafter. They would fain have the enjoyments of self-indulgence in time, and of heaven in eternity. They often seem to succeed in deluding themselves, so far as to persuade themselves that they have accomplished this impossibility. But it is a delusion; and, if persisted in, it will prove a fatal delusion. A religion which requires no self-denial is not the religion of Christ. If the gate be not strait, if the road be not narrow, it is not the gate of life, it is not the road to heaven. In all ages of the world, the way that leadeth to life is narrow. It is not, it cannot be, easy or agreeable to our corrupted nature. It requires attention to find it, self-denial to enter upon it, and labour and resolution to persevere in it.

And in all ages, too, the broad way is the way that leadeth to destruction. A period may come, we trust a period shall come, when the majority of mankind shall be truly religious, but that period has not yet come; and in every past age, to think, and feel, and act in religion, along with the multitude, has been the same thing as to think, and feel, and act wrong. The truly religious are, and ever have been, a minority—comparatively a very small minority. That man has great reason to fear he is fatally wrong, who finds nothing in his religious principles and feelings to separate him from the great body of mankind, and who can approve of the pursuits, and partake of the pleasures, of

almost all around him. He is "of the world," and continuing to be of it, he must perish with it.

The announcement, "Few there be that find it,"—that is, find life by entering in by the strait gate,—has often been misapprehended. It has been supposed to teach the doctrine, that a very small minority of the human race are to be saved. Our Lord did not see fit to answer the inquiry, "Lord, are there few that shall be saved?" when the question was put to him; but from other passages of Scripture we know that there are to be "nations of the saved,"—"a multitude whom no man can number." Scripture leads us to a joyful hope respecting all who die in infancy, and in the age of millennial glory the converts to true religion will be very numerous. But in our Lord's time, in our time, in every intervening age, there can be no doubt, few comparatively have found life by entering in through the strait gate.

These words have also been supposed to intimate that many who are very anxious to be saved may, notwithstanding, come short of salvation. But if men do not find eternal life, it is because they do not seek it in the way in which God has appointed it to be sought. No man who thus seeks it shall seek it in vain. You will observe that, in the parallel passage in Luke, the persons here spoken of, and who are there represented as seeking to enter in, but not able, are persons who become desirous of eternal life when it is too late—"When once the Master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open unto us; he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not whence ye are."¹ "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation." Few find life, for few seek it. None seek it aright but they who are entering through the strait gate, and walking in the narrow way. None who thus seek it shall come short of it.

¹ Luke xiii. 25.

§ 2. *Caution against false teachers, and means of discovering them.*

Our Lord now proceeds to warn his hearers against those teachers whose doctrine might prevent them from entering in at the strait gate, and walking in the narrow way. "Beware of false prophets."¹

The word "prophet," in its literal etymological signification, denotes one who predicts future events. It is frequently, most frequently perhaps, employed in Scripture to signify an inspired teacher,—one divinely commissioned and qualified to make known the will of God. It sometimes, however, seems used to describe a religious instructor, even though he lays no claim to supernatural qualifications.² This, we rather apprehend, is its meaning here. False prophets do not here seem to mean persons making a false pretension to a divine mission, but persons teaching false doctrines in religion. I can scarcely doubt that our Lord directly refers to the Jewish Scribes, who not only would not enter in themselves into the kingdom of the Messiah, but, by their false doctrines, did all in their power to hinder from entering in those who were inclined to do so. The object of their teaching was to prevent men from becoming disciples of Jesus,—to keep them in the broad way, by making them believe it was the way to life,—and to prevent them from entering in through the strait gate, and walking in the narrow way.

They "came in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they were ravening wolves." "They have the appearance and the profession of being humble, harmless, disinterested, and devout,—but they are in reality under the influence of some unworthy principle, actuated by a selfish love of profit or of praise."³

¹ Matth vii. 15.

² 2 Pet. ii. 1. 1 John iv. 1. 2 Cor. xi. 13.

³ Brewster.

Our Lord gives his hearers a mark by which they might know these false prophets,—“Ye shall know them by their fruits.”

The fruits of the false prophets are commonly considered as referring to their moral dispositions and behaviour. This appears to me unduly to restrict the meaning of the phrase, which, I apprehend, refers to their doctrines, as well as to their tempers and actions. ‘Do not give implicit credit to their professions; examine their doctrines by the test of inspired Scripture; and observe, too, what influence their doctrine has on their own character and conduct.’ This is the common-sense plan of judging: “Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?” It is the vine from which men gather grapes—it is the fig-tree which alone produces figs. Sound doctrine, and a holy life, are the best proofs that a religious teacher is worthy of the name; and, on the other hand, unsound doctrine, and an unholy life, are sufficient to discredit all pretensions to claims on our attention, and belief, and obedience: “Every good tree bringeth forth good fruit.” Every really trustworthy religious teacher teaches sound doctrine, and exemplifies the influence of that doctrine in a holy life. “A corrupt tree bringeth forth corrupt fruit:” An unprincipled, selfish, time-serving religious teacher, will discover his character in the doctrine he teaches, or in the manner in which he teaches it, and also in the prevailing tenor of his disposition and behaviour. “A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit:” Every teacher, who really knows and believes the truth himself, cannot but, in his teaching, declare that truth, and, in his character and conduct, exemplify its influence. And, on the other hand, “A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit:” A false teacher cannot but, in his teaching and conduct, exhibit what, to a careful observer, will be found a sufficient proof of his true character. “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire:” Every religious

teacher who does not publish the truth, and exemplify it, shall, sooner or later, be punished by God.

“Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” It is not by their profession, but by their doctrine, and by their conduct, that you are to judge of the claims which religious teachers have on your attention, faith, and obedience.

These words, as uttered by our Lord, had, no doubt, a peculiar reference to the circumstances of those to whom they were originally addressed ; but, like every other part of this admirable discourse, they are replete with important instruction to his followers, in all countries and ages. “As there were false prophets among the people of Israel,” so, says the Apostle Peter, under the influence of the Spirit of prophecy, “there shall be false teachers among you.” In every age of the church, this prediction has been fulfilled. Men, bearing the name of christian ministers, “Have brought in damnable heresies ; and have not only brought on themselves swift destruction,” but have “drawn many after them, in their pernicious ways.” It is the duty and the interest of all Christ’s followers to be on their guard against these false teachers, and to apply, in every case, the Saviour’s rule : “By their fruits shall ye know them.” “By good words, and fair speeches, these men have often deceived the hearts of the simple,” and men have been made to think themselves safe, while they were walking in the broad way which leads to destruction. The command of our Lord, by his apostle, exactly corresponds to the maxim here laid down :—“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God ; because many false prophets are gone out into the world.” Try them by their fruits, by their doctrines :—“Hereby know ye the Spirit of God : Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God : and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God : and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come ; and even now already is it in the

world." Try them by their spirit and conduct:—"They are of the world; therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them."¹

The rule furnished by our Lord is substantially this: 'Receive no one as a religious teacher, whose doctrine does not harmonise with the declarations of the word of God, however apparently devout and holy he may be; and receive no one as a religious teacher, however rigidly orthodox he may profess to be, who in his temper and behaviour is worldly or wicked.'

There is no doubt there may be difficulties in applying this rule, like all general rules. We may be mistaken, both on the favourable and the unfavourable side; yet, as a general direction for those who sit, not as final judges, but merely for the practical purposes of the present life, it is admirably fitted to answer the end for which it was given.² If a man oppose, in his teaching, the principles of inspired Scripture, he cannot be a teacher of truth; and he can scarcely be reasonably supposed to be leading men to heaven, who is manifestly himself walking in an opposite direction. False teachers endeavour to give their errors the appearance of truth; but the man, whose eye is single, will seldom find it difficult to see through the disguise; and the virtue, and amiableness, by which teachers of error are not unfrequently distinguished, when carefully examined by the touchstone of the Divine word, will be found to consist chiefly of such things as are highly esteemed in the sight of men, and to be connected with the habitual disregard of many duties, and the habitual indulgence in many practices, which, though the world approves of them, are indeed abominable in the sight of God. He who conscientiously applies our Lord's rule, will run very little risk of being imposed on by false teachers.³

The times in which we live are characterised by a great

¹ 1 John iv. 1, 2, 3, 5.

² Fuller.

³ Scott.

disposition, on the part of many professors of Christianity, to "give heed to seducing spirits," to attend to every one who assumes to himself the character of a christian teacher, either from the pulpit or the press, if he but bring forward something new or strange. With regard to these self-constituted teachers, it may very justly be said, that whatever is true in their doctrine, is not new; and whatever is new, is not true. The command has seldom been more seasonable: "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. Be not tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine, and cunning craftiness of men, who lie in wait to deceive." And seldom has the wisdom of our Lord's rule been more strikingly exemplified, than in what has occurred, and is occurring, in reference to those men, who, by their strange opinions and wild pretensions, have drawn upon themselves so unenviable a notoriety: "By their fruits shall ye know them."

§ 3. *Caution against Self-deception.*

Our Lord proceeds to caution his disciples against self-deception, and to impress on their mind that nothing short of repentance, proving itself by its appropriate fruits,—nothing short of a real change of mind, producing a real change of conduct—would serve the purpose; that a mere acknowledgment of the truth of his doctrine, a mere profession of obedience to his authority, would be utterly profitless in the way of obtaining a portion in the peculiar blessings of the new economy.

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven."¹

In explaining this passage, the first thing to be done, is to ascertain the meaning of the phrase, "To enter into the kingdom of heaven." The kingdom of heaven, as I have

¹ Matth. vii. 21.

often had occasion to remark, is the new order of things introduced by the Messiah. This new order of things may be contemplated as begun in the present state, and perfected in a future state; and the phrase, "kingdom of God," or "of heaven," sometimes has a direct reference to the one, and sometimes to the other, of these two aspects of the same economy. Many, perhaps most, interpreters consider the phrase here, as referring to the last of them, and as equivalent to the state of celestial blessedness. "Not every one shall enter into the kingdom of heaven," is, in their estimation, just equivalent to, 'not every one shall get to heaven, shall enjoy that state of perfect holy happiness which is reserved for the subjects of the Messiah, in the world to come.' They consider the entrance into the kingdom, and the entrance into life, as the same event; and this event is to take place in "that day" of which our Lord speaks in the verse that immediately follows, which seems plainly to refer to the day of judgment.

I am disposed, however, to understand the phrase, in what appears to me its ordinary meaning, as equivalent to, participating of the peculiar blessings of Christianity, whether these are enjoyed on earth or in heaven; blessings which, from their very nature, can be enjoyed only by the man who repents, who is converted, who is born again,—and who proves all this, by exhibiting in his temper and conduct, the fruits of this repentance, conversion, and new-birth.

The expression, 'to call a person lord,' is equivalent to 'to acknowledge him as master.' If there be any emphasis in the repetition of the word "lord," it is intended to express, not merely profession, but a decided, open, habitual profession. Our Lord's declaration, then, is, that a profession of embracing his religion, however explicit, public, and often repeated, does not open the way into the enjoyment of the peculiar blessings of his kingdom, unless it is proved to be the result of true repentance,—a real change of mind,—by a corres-

ponding course of conduct in doing the will of his Father in heaven.¹

The words before us obviously imply, what is very distinctly stated in other parts of Scripture, that a profession of discipleship, an acknowledgment of our submission in mind and heart to Christ Jesus, is absolutely necessary in order to our enjoying the privileges of discipleship. No person who does not call Christ "Lord, Lord," can "enter into the kingdom of God;" no man who is ignorant of his claims, who treats these claims with neglect, who rejects these claims, or who, though he may be all but persuaded that these claims are just, yet, from worldly motives, does not acknowledge them,—no such person can participate in the peculiar blessings of his disciples, either on earth or in heaven.

While this important truth is plainly implied in our Lord's words, the truth which they directly teach is, that profession, however necessary in connection with faith and obedience, cannot of itself secure a participation in the peculiar blessings of the new economy. The man who says, "Lord, Lord," while he does not "do the will of our Lord's Father," shall not "enter into the kingdom of God."

Many of the Jews, struck by our Lord's miracles, were disposed to become his disciples, while ignorant of, and strongly opposed to, that manifestation of the Divine will respecting the salvation of men, which formed the doctrine and the law of the kingdom of God. To prevent such men from supposing, that their merely acknowledging him as a teacher sent from God, or even as the Messiah, in the sense in which they understood that word, would secure for them the blessings he came to bestow, seems to have been the object of our Lord in making this declaration; and it affords a fine illustration of his determination to take no unfair advantage of men's prejudices,—of that thorough plain deal-

¹ There is a calling Christ, Lord, that is necessarily connected with salvation. 1 Cor. xii. 3; Rom. x. 13.

ing which is so strikingly characteristic of the whole of his transactions with his countrymen.

The declaration, though primarily addressed to his countrymen, is full of important instruction to all, in every country and in every age, where his religion is presented to the examination and reception of men. It is still true, it will always be true, that "not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of his Father who is in heaven,"—that some, that many, professors of Christianity will come short of the enjoyment of the blessings of Christianity.

There are many persons who may with propriety be denominated mere "nominal" Christians.¹ They bear the name of Christ, and that is all. They have been born in a country where Christianity is the prevailing religion; they have received probably some kind of instruction in what are considered as the elements of that religion; they may belong to some religious society bearing the name of a christian church. If questioned respecting their faith, they readily declare that they are Christians; but that means little more than that they are not Jews, Pagans, Mohammedans, or professed infidels. Such persons often are grossly ignorant of the doctrines of Christianity; they often live in habitual neglect of the institutions of Christianity. They would be greatly puzzled to give an answer to the question, What is it to be a Christian? and, if possible, still more so to the question, Why do you profess to be a CHRISTIAN? Surely such persons cannot enter into the kingdom of God. They cannot participate in its spiritual blessings, either on earth or in heaven. The blessings would not be spiritual if these men could enjoy them.

There is another numerous class, who may be styled "formal" Christians. They are able to repeat some catechism, and can give something like an intelligent account

¹ For this division of those who call Christ "Lord, Lord," I am indebted to Dr Brewster.

of the doctrines and the laws of Christ. They profess submission to his authority, and with, it may be, exemplary regularity, observe all the external acts of worship which characterise his followers; but their religion is just a system of speculative opinions and external observances. They have a form of Christianity, but they know nothing about its power. They have no wish to experience its governing influence on their affections and pursuits, and, indeed, very generally view, as deluded enthusiasts or canting hypocrites, all who seem to consider an experimental Christianity as the only genuine Christianity. It is equally plain, that these persons shall not enter into the kingdom of God. They do not understand and believe that truth which, when understood and believed, influences the whole nature, and transforms the whole character; and which, by doing so, puts the individual in possession of the heavenly and spiritual blessings which are in Christ Jesus.

There is a third class included in the general declaration of our Lord, who may be termed "hypocritical" Christians. Like the formal Christian, the hypocritical Christian acknowledges the truth, and observes the ordinances, of Christianity, and, in addition, is usually zealous, even to rancour, in the defence of the one, and exact, even to scrupulosity, in the observance of the other. Not content with a dull formal round of duties, he assumes the appearance of a deep interest in religion, while all the time, his object is to obtain the honours of supposed saintship, or to pacify his conscience while living in the neglect of known duty, and the commission of known sin. This is incomparably the vilest of the three characters I have sketched; and surely it needs no proof nor illustration that such a person, notwithstanding the loudness and frequency of his protestations that Christ Jesus is his Lord, cannot be recognised by him as a genuine disciple, and cannot, while he continues what he is, participate in the privileges of genuine discipleship.

To all who belong to these three classes, it may well be

said by our Lord—"Why call ye me Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say to you?"

To the mere nominal Christian it may be said,—‘Your conduct is utterly unworthy of a rational being; what can be more absurd than to bear a name, of the meaning of which you are ignorant,—to pretend to believe a revelation, of the contents and the evidence of which you are equally ill-informed? If you will not yield that attention to Christianity which is necessary in order to understand and believe it, it were an act of respect for yourself, and of justice to that system which you degrade by pretending to be its adherent, to renounce the name, which in your case is a mere name.’

To the formal Christian it may be said,—‘How inconsistent it is to profess to believe doctrines which, if true, are infinitely important, and yet remain unimpressed by them; how absurd to observe ordinances, and yet be altogether careless about the sentiments of which these acts of worship are intended to be the expression, the habits of thought and feeling which they are intended to produce and strengthen. How foolish to take up with the husk instead of the grain; the shell instead of the kernel; with a dead carcase instead of a living body?’

To the hypocritical Christian it may be said,—‘Your conduct, as it is more contemptible, so assuredly it is not less irrational and absurd, than that of your nominal and formal brethren. Know ye not “that all things are naked and opened before Him, with whom you have to do,” and that few affronts will be more severely punished by him than dishonour done to his omniscience. “Be not deceived, He is not mocked.” Instead of being admitted into the kingdom, the hypocrite’s portion will be in “outer darkness, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth.”’

When a person looks, with an observant eye, through what is but too appropriately called the christian *world*, what vast multitudes appear to arrange themselves under these

three classes; and how awfully emphatic do the words of our Lord appear to be, "not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven?"

While our Lord thus declares, that a profession of belief in his doctrines, and of submission to his authority, unconnected with subjection of mind and heart to him manifested in disposition and conduct, will be utterly ineffectual in the way of obtaining for a man a participation in the blessings of the heavenly kingdom, he with equal plainness asserts, that the man whose profession is verified by his behaviour, shall be made a partaker of these blessings. "He that doeth the will of my Father in heaven, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

This designation is plainly equivalent to, 'He that not only calls me Lord, but does the will of my Father in heaven.' The "will of God" as the Father of our Lord and Saviour, is "that men should be saved through the knowledge of the truth," and "to do" the will of God, is just to seek for salvation through the knowledge of the truth. It is his will that men, believing the truth respecting Jesus Christ, and the way of salvation through him, should rely entirely on his atonement and grace; and, acknowledging his supreme authority, "walk without fear before God, in all his commandments and ordinances blameless."

The fundamental part of the will of God is revealed in these words:—"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye him." When this is complied with, everything else follows.¹ Without it, sinful man cannot in any degree do the will of God. From the time that a sinner, by believing the truth, relies on the Saviour's atonement, embraces his salvation, and submits to his authority, his habitual employment is to do the will of God. He is far from yielding a perfect obedience to that will, but it is the prevailing bent of his mind, the constant object of his endeavour, to be "perfect and complete in all the will of

¹ Scott.

God ;” to have his mind brought into complete accordance with God’s mind, his will into complete accordance with God’s will. The person who, in the faith of the truth, habitually seeks conformity to the will of God, in heart, and in life, whose aim it is to make the will of God the rule of his thoughts, and feelings, and actions,—that man, and that man alone, is a true subject of the Messiah ; he, and he alone, enjoys the peculiar immunities and privileges of the kingdom of God, both on earth and in heaven.

This awfully interesting truth is presented in a form peculiarly impressive in the words which follow, in which our Lord unfolds the principle according to which the final states of men shall be fixed, “ Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name ?¹ and in thy name have cast out devils ? and in thy name done many wonderful works ? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you : depart from me, ye that work iniquity.”²

In these words our Lord obviously goes on the principle, that he was the appointed Judge of all,—that according to his sentence the final state of men was to be fixed. By “ that day ” we are to understand what is ordinarily termed the day of judgment—“ the day in which every man’s work shall be made manifest, being tried by fire.”³

I do not think that we are to consider the words before us as a literal description of what is then to take place. It seems impossible that the persons referred to should continue, during the period of their separate existence in the unseen world, under the delusion that they were so connected with Christ, as to have reason to expect, on the judgment-day, that they are to share in the happiness which he is then to bestow on his people. The hope of the nominal, formal, hypocritical professors of Christianity, must perish at

¹ “ *Adde* : Commentarios et observationes exegeticas ad libros et loca. V. et N. T. scripsimus, homilias insignes habuimus,” &c.—BENGEL.

² Matth. vii. 22, 23.

³ 1 Cor. iii. 13.

death. We are to consider the words just as a striking and picturesque statement of the truth, that multitudes of men, who made a profession of Christianity, and who were even possessed of the supernatural gifts by which the primitive age of that religion was distinguished, and who flattered themselves to the last that they would be saved, shall, in consequence of their not having done the will of Christ's Father in heaven, be shut out from all participation in the happiness of the genuine followers of Christ, and a clear demonstration then given that he never considered them as belonging to that class.¹ Many who have prophesied in his name, who in his name have cast out devils, and done many wonderful works, shall, in the day of judgment, be rejected by him, as persons whom *he* had never acknowledged as his disciples.²

That miraculous gifts did not necessarily infer the true christian character of those who possessed them, is quite evident, and, in itself, does not seem more wonderful than the undoubted fact, that uncommon intellectual endowments are by no means necessarily connected with moral worth. We have no reason to doubt that Judas performed miracles as well as the rest of the apostles.

All who have not done the will of God, though they may have been members of the christian church, though they may have been ministers in it, though they may have been singularly gifted, and even miraculously endowed, shall, in the day of judgment, be rejected and condemned.

Their rejection and condemnation is described by the Judge saying to them, "Depart from me: I never knew you, ye workers of iniquity."³ The word "knew" here is

¹ "Hypocrisy here appears, at the same time, in the light of self-delusion. That a bandying of words on the day of judgment is out of the question, must be understood as a matter of course."—OLSHAUSEN.

² There is no room for Augustine's question, Whether this is not an additional lie?

³ The words that are added, Luke xiii. 25, *εἰθί, ἵερὶ*, rendered in our translation, Whence ye are—should be given interrogatively, Whence are YE?—not *ἀπὸ ἑσθί*.

used in a somewhat peculiar sense. In the ordinary sense of the word, our Lord *knew* them all along. They imposed on others,—they imposed, perhaps, on themselves; but they never imposed on him,—he was “not deceived,” he was “not mocked.” From the first, “all things were naked and opened before him;”—he searched their hearts, he tried their reins, he knew what was in them. “Knew” is here equivalent to acknowledge, or approve,—a sense of the term of not unfrequent occurrence in Scripture. “The Lord *knoweth* the way of the righteous,”¹—he approves, and gives tokens of his approval, of their way. “You only have I *known* of all the nations of the earth,”—acknowledged as my peculiar people.² “I *know*”—acknowledge—“my sheep, and am *known*”—acknowledged—“of mine. As the Father *knoweth*”—acknowledgeth—“me, even so *know*”—acknowledge—“I the Father.”³

It will be made evident then, that, whatever place these persons held among his people, he never recognised them as his; for while “in *words* they acknowledged him, in *works* they denied him.” Their being workers of iniquity,—that is, their habitually doing anything inconsistent with the will of God,—has far more weight, as evidence that they did not belong to Christ, than all external privileges, and miracles, and mighty works have, that they did belong to him.

The general truth taught in these words is one of the most awfully impressive in the word of God. Let us allow it to sink into our ears, into our minds, into our hearts. Let us beware of concluding ourselves Christians—let us beware of supposing that the interests of our eternity are secure, because we belong to a christian church, however pure—because we even hold office in it, however high—because our attainments in religious speculative knowledge are extensive, and we can display them so as to secure the good opinion, and even command the admiration, of our

¹ Psal. i. 6.² Amos iii. 2.³ John x. 14, 15.

fellow church-members. Let us do the will of our Father in heaven. In a firm belief of the truth, let us rely on the Saviour's atonement, submit to the Saviour's authority, seek the aid of the Saviour's Spirit; and while we gladly and gratefully receive eternal life as the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, let us, in a "constant continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality." Oh, let all of us who profess to have "received the Lord Jesus, walk in him;" and, professing to love him, let us "keep his commandments."

VIII. PERORATION.

MATTH. VII. 24-27.

§ 1. *General illustration.*

These impressive words form the peroration of our Lord's Sermon on the Mount. The statement they convey is awfully important, and the language in which it is expressed is remarkable alike for its beauty and its force. The different, the opposite, fates of those who do, and who do not, regulate their characters and their hopes according to the principles contained in this wonderful discourse, are represented under images, calculated to strike universally, but peculiarly fitted to make an impression on the minds of those to whom they were originally presented, as being borrowed from natural phenomena with which they were familiarly acquainted.

In Judea, as in other oriental countries, the rains are periodical. When they descend, they often descend in torrents, and continue to do so, with unabated violence, for a number of days. In consequence of this, the most trifling mountain brook becomes a mighty river—a deluge rushes down with dreadful impetuosity from the high grounds to the plains, converting them into one wide waste of waters. The huts of the inhabitants, generally formed of clay hard-

ened in the sun, are exposed to great danger. They are often literally melted down by the heavy rains, or overturned by the furious gusts of wind ; and, when not founded on the solid rock, undermined and swept away by the resistless torrent.¹ In such a country, it is the part of a wise man to take good care that the foundation on which he builds his habitation be solid. He who attends to this precaution, is likely to find the advantage of doing so ; and he who neglects this precaution, is likely to pay dear for his folly. Such are the facts to which our Lord refers, and from which he draws an illustration of the wisdom of the man who “hears and does his words,” and the folly of him “who hears them, but will not do them.” Let us examine that illustration a little more particularly :—“Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell not : for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand ; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house ; and it fell : and great was the fall of it.”²

The connective particle translated “therefore,”³ does not necessarily imply, that what follows it is a logical inference from what is previously stated. It very often merely marks transition of thought ; but, in the case before us, it seems to import more than this. For, surely, if “Not every one

¹ “I enjoyed yesterday a delightful prospect of the whole plain and the surrounding scenery under a glorious sun, with a most serene atmosphere ; but, to-day, I beheld it in the wildest and most terrific grandeur. I was unluckily overtaken by a storm, as if the flood-gates of heaven had been set open, which came on in a moment, and raged with mighty fury, conveying a just idea of the end of all things : during this time, there was a solemn gloom, and darkness spread over the whole land.”—RAE WILSON'S *Travels in the Holy Land*, p. 310 ; quoted by Tholuck.

² Matt. vii. 24-27.

³ *εἰ*.

who calls Christ, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he only who does the will of his Father who is in heaven,"—if, to all workers of iniquity, even although they should have "prophesied, and cast out devils, and done many wonderful works," in the name of Christ, it shall at last be said by our Lord, determining by his judgment the final state of men, "Depart from me; I never knew you,"—then it certainly follows, that he who hears and does our Lord's sayings, is a wise man, and that he who hears them, and does them not, is a fool. The one secures, the other loses, the salvation of the soul, the happiness of eternity.

The first thing, then, to be done here, is to ascertain what our Lord means by "hearing and doing," and by "hearing and not doing, his words." Our Lord obviously refers to the discourse which he was concluding, and of which, I apprehend, as of most of his discourses, we have only an imperfect account; but what he says of these words of his, is equally true of all his words, whether spoken by himself personally, or made known through the medium of his inspired apostles.

To "hear" is often, in the New Testament, used in a very extensive sense, as equivalent to,—to listen, attend, believe, obey. Such is its meaning in phrases like the following:—"This is my beloved Son, hear him." "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them." "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."¹ In the case before us, it seems used in a more confined sense. To hear our Lord's sayings, is just to have them addressed to us, to have an opportunity of becoming acquainted with them.

To "do" our Lord's sayings, is often interpreted as if it meant merely to perform those actions which our Lord requires. This is, however, very improperly to limit its meaning. To do our Lord's sayings, is just to conform the whole

¹ Matth. xvii. 5. Luke xvi. 29. Matth. xi. 15.

inner and outward man to these sayings—to form our whole character by them—to fashion our habits of thought, of feeling, and of action, in accordance with them. The man, then, who “hears and does these sayings” of our Lord, is the man who not only has them addressed to him, who not only listens to them, who not only understands their meaning, but who, believing them, learns to think, and feel, and act, according to them; who through these sayings, understood and believed, repents, changes his mind, is “converted,” is radically changed, is “born again,” becomes “a new creature,” being “transformed by this renewing of his mind.” This is the one character.

The other is described as hearing, but not doing, these words of our Lord. Under this description, a variety of characters are included, having all, however, one distinctive mark, that, while they hear the words of our Lord, they do them not. One class, to whom our Lord’s words are addressed, pay no attention to them—they make light of them. Another class listen with some degree of attention, profess to inquire, and, after a very partial inquiry, refuse to believe and obey them. Another class profess to believe his words, and declare their determination to obey them; but while they “call him Lord, Lord, they do not the things which he says” to them. It is not unlikely that our Lord had a special reference to this last class, when he used these words.

All these classes have this in common, that, while they have the means of obtaining acquaintance with our Lord’s words, they refuse that practical subjection of mind, and heart, and conduct to them, to which they are entitled, and without which, from the very nature of the case, saving advantage cannot be derived from them.

Having thus ascertained who they are who hear and do our Lord’s sayings, and who they are who hear and do them not, let us inquire into what our Lord says in reference to these two descriptions of men:—“I will liken the man who

hears these sayings of mine, to a wise man,¹ who built his house upon a rock; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock." And "I will liken the man who hears these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it."

These words obviously imply this general truth, 'The first class of men, notwithstanding all the trials and dangers to which they may be exposed, shall assuredly obtain final happiness; the second class of men, shall no less assuredly involve themselves in complete and everlasting destruction.' In other words, there is no other way of being saved, but by repenting and being converted, no "entering into the kingdom of God," without being "born again." Nothing different from, nothing short of, a surrender of the mind and heart, to the authority of Christ Jesus speaking in his word, can secure salvation. If, on hearing his word, you refuse to attend to it, or reject it as false, or while you profess to consider it as true, you in consequence of not really understanding and believing it, continue strangers to its transforming efficacy, you must perish. If, on hearing his words, you understand and believe them, and yield yourselves up to their influence, you shall assuredly be saved. This is the great general truth which these figurative representations are intended to convey.

§ 2. *More particular illustration.*

But I apprehend, that in the present case, as in most others, even the minuter parts of the figurative illustrations employed by our Lord are replete with instruction, and it

¹ *σοφιστας*. The *σοφισ* has the right end in view, the *σοφιστας* chooses also the right means for gaining the right end. Matth. xxv. 2. Luke xvi. 8. Matth. x. 16.

may serve a good purpose to inquire, in reference to both the wise and the foolish builder, what is the foundation? what is the superstructure? what is the trial to which it is exposed? and what is the result of the trial?

(1.) *The wise builder and his fate.*

First, then, what is the foundation of "rock" on which the wise builder—that is, "the man who hears and does the sayings of our Lord,"—places the edifice he is about to raise? I apprehend the foundation is just these sayings of our Lord, understood and believed. These sayings are the dictates of eternal truth and righteousness; and the everlasting mountains shall be sooner rooted up than any one of them shall be falsified. This is the foundation on which the wise builder places his edifice, not his own conjectures or reasonings, not the conjectures or reasonings of other men, but "the true and faithful sayings of God."

Now, what is the building which he erects on this foundation? The building, I apprehend, shadows forth either the character which he cultivates, or the hopes he cherishes.

By character I understand the whole frame of a man's sentiments, and affections, and active habits. The wise builder having, by the faith of the truth, found the only sure foundation, erects on it an edifice of thoughts, and feelings, and actions. He is moulded according to "the form of doctrine into which he has been delivered."¹

The building, in the figurative representation now under consideration, may have a special reference to the hope which the hearer and doer of the sayings of Christ cherishes. That hope is entirely founded on these sayings. He has a "hope of eternal life"—a "good hope through grace"—but that hope rests entirely on what Christ has said to him. It is indeed an essential part of that spiritual character, which we consider as the edifice which the wise builder raises on the rocky foundation.

¹ Rom. vi. 17.

The next inquiry is, what is the trial to which this building is to be exposed? "The rain descended, the floods came, the winds blew, and beat upon that house."

Some interpreters seem to think that these are emblematical of the afflictions of life, or of the temptations of satan. I cannot help thinking they are intended to represent the final trial at the general judgment. The whole of the paragraph points the mind to the transactions of "that day."¹ The solstitial rains were the severest trial to which a Jewish house could be exposed, and they seem to shadow forth the severest trial to which human character and human hopes can be subjected. Sometimes to denote the same idea, the final judgment is represented as a trial by fire. Men's characters and hopes must all undergo an examination before the judgment-seat of God.

This is, I apprehend, the trial; and what will be the result, when the edifice of the wise builder is thus tried? "The house fell not, for it was founded upon a rock." That spiritual character which was formed under the influence of the sayings of Christ, understood and believed, will meet with the Divine approbation. There will be much wanting and much wrong, and that will be freely forgiven for Christ's sake; but the frame of character, of thought, feeling, and action, formed by the faith of the truth, will meet the unqualified approbation of God; and the hope founded on these sayings will prove to be a "hope that maketh not ashamed," a hope which He who is faithful and just will completely fulfil. The building stood firm, for the foundation was firm. The spiritual character of the believer will meet with the approbation of God at last, just because it is in accordance with that revelation of perfect truth and righteousness, which was made by Jesus Christ. The hope of the believer will be realised, just because he hoped for what God, who cannot lie, had promised. Such, I

¹ 2 Tim. i. 18.

apprehend, is the full import of the figurative representation of the hearer and doer of Christ's sayings, as a wise builder.

(2.) *The foolish builder and his fate.*

Let us now institute a similar inquiry, in reference to him who hears, but does not do, the sayings of our Lord, and who is represented as a foolish builder. What is his foundation? What is his building? What is the trial it must be exposed to, and what will be the result of that trial?

What is the foundation of the foolish builder? If our general apprehension of the figurative representation be correct—his foundation is whatever is the basis of his character, and the ground of his hopes for eternity. This is not the true and faithful sayings of the Saviour, for though he hears them, he does not conform his mind to them—he does not believe them. His foundation is that set of false principles, whatever they may be, or wherever they may have been got, which regulate his temper and conduct, and are the basis of his character, the ground of his hopes. These vary in different individuals. In the case of those whom our Lord was addressing, the traditions of the fathers, the doctrines of the Scribes and Pharisees, were probably the foundation on which they were building.

The edifice itself is just that character, that mode of thinking, feeling, and acting, which such false principles naturally produce, or those hopes which they naturally inspire. That character has often a great degree of plausibility, and gains in no ordinary measure the esteem and approbation of men. Those hopes are often very confidently entertained. But the stability of the edifice must be tested.

Both the character and hopes must be subjected to the test of the Divine judgment. Weighed in the balances, they will be found wanting. "That which was highly esteemed among men," will be found to be "abomination in

the sight of God,"¹ and all the fondly cherished expectations of happiness will vanish in the darkness of everlasting despair. The house will fall, and dreadful will be its overthrow. No character will stand the Divine judgment, but that which is formed in accordance with the sayings of Christ. No hope will in that day be "gladness," but the hope which these sayings warrant.

From this passage, ill understood, some false and dangerous conclusions have been drawn. 'It appears from this,' say some, 'that it is by doing, and not by believing, that we are to be saved.' They do not observe, that what our Lord contrasts, is not believing and doing, but hearing and doing; they do not observe, that in the doing of Christ's sayings, believing these sayings is necessarily implied; and they do not observe, that our Lord is not here discoursing on the ground or mode of justification, but on the principles and procedure of the final judgment.

'It appears from this,' say another class, 'that it matters but very little what doctrines we believe, if we have a good life.' It would not be very easy to show how a man is to live a really good life, if he does not believe true doctrine; and in the passage before us, Christ's sayings, understood and believed, are plainly represented as the only foundation on which a character and conduct pleasing to God can be reared.

This discourse of our Lord produced a strong impression on the minds of those who heard it. The people "were astonished at his doctrine."

The word "doctrine" may be considered as descriptive both of the matter and of the manner of his teaching. The people were astonished, both at what he taught, and the mode in which he taught. What he taught, bore the impression of truth and importance. Nothing was doubtful, nothing trivial. And his

¹ Luke xvi. 15.

doctrines were perspicuously and energetically expressed. We can have no doubt they were also delivered in a natural, dignified, earnest, and pleasing manner; and besides, they were in many instances attended by the divine energy of his Spirit, and thus secured of their appropriate influence over the mind and heart.

What particularly excited the astonishment of the people, was the contrast between his doctrine, or teaching, and that to which they had been accustomed, the doctrine of the Scribes,—“he taught them as with authority, and not as the Scribes.”¹

The teachers among the Jews, though they had the law and the prophets, and might therefore have taught certain and important truth, and had they been themselves influenced by it, must have taught it in a manner somewhat impressive, and ought to have taught it authoritatively, as being a revelation from heaven; yet they in fact employed themselves more about the traditions of the fathers, than about the doctrines of Moses and the prophets; and when they made the Scriptures the subject of their discourses, did not dwell on the great principles of religious truth and duty, but on the lesser matters of the law. “The tithing of mint, and anise, and cummin”—the comparative obligation of an oath by the temple, and the gold of the temple—by the altar, and the gift on the altar²—these seem to be a fair specimen of their subjects of teaching. In speaking of these things, they did not speak with authority. In one sense, they spoke with too much authority, for “they taught for doctrines the commandments of men”³—they re-

¹ “The Scribes frequently spake truths, but they wanted the *ἐξουσία πνευματική*. Their discourses were pictures painted on the air, without being possessed of any essential or life-bestowing power: This, the words of Jesus breathed forth; and, by means of them, he laid hold of the hearts of his hearers in their innermost depths; hence, wherever there was dormant in the interior of any person an echo for truth, there this echo was necessarily awakened.”—OLSHAUSEN.

² Matth. xxiii. 18.

³ Matth. xv. 9.

quired men to believe, what they could give no sufficient reason for their believing. They did not manifest the authority of God, and truth, and duty. They appealed chiefly, if not solely, to the traditions of the elders, and the opinions of the Rabbis.

Our Lord, on the contrary, taught with "authority." They were accustomed to introduce their teaching with, *It was said by the ancients*; He introduced his with, *"But I say unto you,"—"Verily, verily, I say unto you."* In all he said, he taught as one who had full authority from God to teach. His whole manner was that of one who spoke in the name of God, and who well knew, that what he uttered was eternal truth, what he enjoined, eternal righteousness.

Let us recollect, my brethren, that to us these words of authority have come, as well as to those to whom they were originally addressed. We are very stupid, if we are not astonished at them. But we must not only be astonished at them, we must believe them if we would be saved by them. To us, they come if possible with more authority, than to those to whom they were originally addressed. He spoke to them on earth. By inducing his apostles, under the influences of his Spirit, to record these doctrines in a permanent revelation of his will, He "speaks to us from heaven." Let us take good "heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him." "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him speaking on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him speaking from heaven."¹

¹ Heb. ii. 1; xii. 25.

Let us consider his words as, what they indeed are, "the will of our Creator, the commands of our Sovereign,—the laws of our Judge, the counsels of our Father, the entreaties of our Saviour."¹ Let us turn this wonderful discourse to its appropriate purpose. Let us employ it as an instrument for promoting that "repentance," that "conversion," that entire change of mind and of heart, without which we cannot be saved, and in which so much of salvation consists.

Let us seek the Divine Spirit, that the sentiments which it teaches, and the affections which it breathes, may, through that faith which is of his operation, be so engrafted into our minds and hearts, as to form a part of ourselves; so that we may not be among those who say, "Lord, Lord," but do not the things which he says to them, to whom he will at last say, "Depart from me;" but that, conjoining consistent conduct with open profession, cheerfully doing and suffering the will of our Father in heaven, we may at last receive the transporting invitation, "Come ye blessed of my Father," "Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord."²

NOTE A, p. 136.

"The βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ,—in Matthew always βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν,—is again mentioned in the sequel of the Sermon on the mount, at verses 10, 19, 20; vi. 10; vii. 21. To discuss, on all the sides which it presents, an idea so pregnant in meaning as this, calls for a separate work. But as the phrase here requires no very detailed investigation, we content ourselves with stating the leading traits; nor can we refer to any book, where the subject is handled in a manner in every respect satisfactory. Fleck has amassed a variety of materials, it is true; but with great prolixity, he mixes what is foreign, and is deficient in the talent for

¹ Brewster.

² Matth. xxv. 21, 34, 41.

combination and arrangement. If C. Gottfried Bauer had executed the whole plan, of which he made a commencement in the essay "De Causis quibus nititur rectum super ratione Regni Divini in N. T. passim obvia judicium,"¹ something satisfactory might have been expected; at least no modern author who has handled the subject, has equally weighed it on all sides. Much excellent matter is also contained in the Treatise of Sartorius, "Ueber den Zweck Iesu bei Stiftung eines Gottes-Reiches." Amidst all that the doctrinal works of modern times have said upon the subject, the hints thrown out in Baumgarten Crusius' "Biblische Theologie," p. 149-157, seem to me to merit particular consideration. For the most part, writers have been taken up with pointing out the connection of the New Testament doctrine with that of the Rabbins, which, however, is, at all events, a task of less consequence, the moment it is conceded that the Saviour connected with the expression different ideas from theirs.

"Two kinds of defects are to be found in the usual treatment of this doctrine. At one time the different *sides* and *allusions* of the βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ are ranged together as diverse *significations* of the phrase, without any attempt to show their identity, by discovering the fundamental idea; and, at another, what is still worse, *one single aspect of the idea* is exclusively seized, and all the rest disregarded. To mention an ancient commentator, the first defect is exemplified in Euthymius, who, upon Matth. iii. 2, after having previously said that Christ himself is here called the βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, remarks: ἡ βασιλεία οὐρανῶν λέγει τὴν πολιτείαν τῶν ἀγγέλων, ἣν ὁ Χριστὸς ὅσον οὐπω νομοθετεῖν ἐμελλε διὰ τῶν εὐαγγελικῶν ἐντολῶν. λέγεται δὲ βασιλεία οὐρανῶν καὶ ἡ ἀπολαυσις τῶν ἐν οὐρανοῖς ἀγαθῶν. δηλοῖ δὲ καὶ ἄλλα πλείονα τὸ ὄνομα τῆς βασιλείας τῶν οὐρανῶν, πολυσήμαντον ὄν, ὡς προϊόντες εὐρήσομεν.² From the expositors of the middle period, we may here quote the note of Zwinglius upon John iii. 3: "Capitur hic regnum Dei pro doctrina

¹ Commentationes Theol. ed. Rosenmüller et Maurer, i. p. 2.

² Or by the kingdom of heaven he means the commonwealth of the angels, which Christ was about to rule, as never was done before, by gospel precepts. The fruition of celestial blessings is also called the kingdom of heaven; and many other things besides does this name, the kingdom of heaven, imply; for it is very significant, as we shall find in the sequel.

cœlesti et predicatione Evangelii, ut Lucæ xviii. Capitur aliquando pro vitâ æterna, Matth. xxv. Luc. xiv. Quandoque pro Ecclesia et congregatione fidelium, ut Matth. xiii. 24." Even the later lexicographers, Schleusner and Bretschneider, however, have not advanced beyond these indefinite statements; and the article on the subject by the latter is particularly defective. He sets out with the Rabbinical idea, which he also finds in the New Testament, and enumerates a multitude of texts, from which it is impossible to make out *in what sense the term is used!* Matt. iv. 17; v. 10; xix. 23; vii. 21; xvi. 19, 28; xviii. 3, 4, 23; xii. 28, *et passim*. He farther states the meaning, "Felicitas Christianorum post resurrectionem," and then, with a *cæterum*, the very diverse meanings of, "res Christiana, vocatio ad regnum Christi, Christus ipse, nuntii Regni divini." How the word comes to have all these significations he does not explain.¹ Wahl is much more correct, when he comprises all the significations of the word in the following formula: "Felicitas nunc et olim per Iesum obtinenda." But although the unity of the idea is thus preserved, the particular sense of βασιλεία is lost. The second of the faults we mentioned, which consists in giving undue prominence to one side of the subject, and neglecting the rest, appears, to cite examples, in the Treatises of Koppe and Keil, according to whom the word refers only to the future kingdom of the Messiah, which has still to be erected; in Storr, who says, it is to be understood solely of the reign of the glorified Christ; and in Teller, who makes it the constitution of the christian religion. In explaining this name, we shall begin with βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, by which the variations βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, and βασιλεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ will also be explained. According to my view, none have brought forward the fundamental notion more correctly than Origen among the ancients, and Calvin among the Reformers. The particular aspect of the

¹ "Both Bretschneider and Schleusner seem to have entertained the idea, that Christ merely employed the expression by way of accommodation. But thus to disregard so much that is comprised in it, is a crying injustice, of which Semler was first guilty, and against which Baumgarten Crusius rightly says (Bibl. Theol. s. 152), 'It was no mere accommodation, but the only term suitable for the thing and system in question.' The Wolfenbüttel fragments, however, have treated the expression worst of all, and audaciously assert, that Jesus used it in no other sense than the ambitious Jews, and thereby betrayed his own aspiring designs."

idea which the several Fathers of the church seized and stated, can be best seen in their explanations of the second petition of the Lord's Prayer; Augustine especially develops the subject with great depth and fulness. Most of them understand by it *the kingdom of glory, the future revelation of Christ*. Origen alone (in the book *περὶ εὐχῆς*) endeavours more specifically to unfold the idea of *βασιλεία*: *δηλονότι ὁ εὐχόμενος ἐλθεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ, περὶ τοῦ τὴν ἐν αὐτῷ βασιλείαν τοῦ Θεοῦ ἀνατεῖλαι καὶ καρποφορῆσαι καὶ τελειωθῆναι, εὐλόγως εἴχεται. παντὸς μὲν ἁγίου ὑπὸ Θεοῦ βασιλευμένου καὶ τοῖς πνευματικοῖς νόμοις τοῦ Θεοῦ πειθομένου, οἷον εἰ εὐνομούμενην πόλιν οἰκοῦντος ἑαυτοῦ· παρόντος αὐτῷ τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ συμβουλευόντος τῷ πατρὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν τῇ τετελειωμένῃ ψυχῇ κατὰ τὸ εἰρημέ-
νον, οὐ πρὸ βραχέως ἐμνημόνευον· πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐλευσόμεθα καὶ μονὴν παρ' αὐτῷ ποιησόμεθα.*¹

"After some intermediate illustrations, he proceeds: The more the hallowing of God's name takes place, the more also will his kingdom come, and that be fulfilled which is written, 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 10; and then he adds, *Τῇ οὖν ἐν ἡμῖν βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ ἡ ἀκρότης ἀδιαλείπτως προκόπτουσιν ἐνστήσεται, ὅταν πληρωθῇ τὸ παρὰ τῷ Ἀποστόλῃ εἰρημένον, ὅτι ὁ Χριστὸς, πάντων αὐτῷ τῶν ἐχθρῶν ὑποταγέντων, παραδώσει τὴν βασιλείαν τῷ θεῷ καὶ πατρί, ἵνα ἡ ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσι.*² With these admirable words let the reader compare what he says upon the same subject in another place, Hom. xiv. in Matth.,³ where he calls Christ in his own person, viewing him as the principle by which sin is to be vanquished, the *βασιλεία*; for of the *βασιλεία* in our text, he says, That properly it is Christ himself who is promised to the poor as the *αὐτο-βασιλεία*. In accordance with these views of the ancient fathers,

¹ "It is clear, that whoever prays for the kingdom of God to come, prays by due inference for that kingdom to be set up, and bear fruit, and reach perfection in himself: Inasmuch as every saint who is under the dominion of God, and obeys his spiritual laws, dwells, as it were, in the well governed city of himself, the Father being present with him, and Christ giving counsel with the Father in the perfect soul, according to that text, of which, for brevity, I cite, 'We will come unto him and make our abode with him.'"

² "For those who incessantly advance, the consummation of the kingdom of God within us shall commence when that saying of the apostle has been fulfilled, That Christ, having put all enemies under his feet, shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that God may be all in all."

³ Ed. de la Rue, T. iii. p. 929.

Calvin, in the Commentary to his Harmony upon Matth. vi. 10, has the following words: 'Regnare enim dicitur Deus inter homines, quum carne suâ sub jugum redactâ et suis cupiditatibus valere jussis illi se regendos ultro addicunt et tradunt Quare summa hujus precationis est, ut Deus verbi sui luce mundum irradiet, Spiritus sui afflatu corda formet in obsequium justitiæ suæ, quicquid est dissipatum in terra suis auspiciis in ordinem restituat, exordium vero regnandi faciat a subigendis carnis nostræ cupiditatibus. Jam vero, quia regnum Dei per continuos progressus augetur usque ad mundi finem, necesse est quotidie optare ejus adventum.' With this is to be compared his comment upon Matth. iii. 2, and John iii. 3, where, among other things, he says: 'Falluntur qui regnum Dei pro cœlo accipiunt, cum potius spiritualem vitam significet, quæ fide in hoc mundo inchoatur, magisque in dies adolescit, secundum assiduos fidei progressus.' What Calvin, guided by a systematic consideration of texts of Scripture, here expresses, Luther, following the dictates of his pious heart, handles in the beautiful sermon, *On the Kingdom of God*, of the year 1524,¹ with which we may compare his exposition of the eighth Psalm, § 22, 23.² We lay down, accordingly, as the fundamental notion of the kingdom of God: *A community in which God reigns, and which, as the nature of a right government involves, obeys him not by constraint, but from free will and affection; of which it follows, as a necessary consequence, that the parties are intimately bound to each other in the mutual interchange of offices of love.* To establish a community of this kind, was the purpose for which the Saviour appeared upon the earth; and forasmuch as it can only exist in perfection after the defeat of all his enemies, 1 Cor. xv. 28; Heb. x. 13, the chief seat of this kingdom of Christ is, doubtless, in the world to come; and it is a gross error, when Usteri, in the 4th edition of his 'Paulinischer Lehrbegriff,'³ follows Rosenkranz, and would persuade us, that the kingdom of Christ belongs *only* to the world that now is. The prophets, whose glance, it is true, took in the whole extent of the Messiah's kingdom, but was chiefly fixed upon the period of its completion, were thereby

¹ Walch, Vol. xii. p. 1938.² Walch, Vol. v. p. 294.³ P. 371.

led to place it at the end of time, and, in like manner, most of the texts of the New Testament promise it as something beyond the grave. See this done, for example, by the Evangelists, Matth. xiii. 43 ; xxv. 34 ; xxvi. 29 ; Mark ix. 47 ; Luke xiii. 29 ; and equally so, though many call this into question, by the apostles, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10 ; Gal. v. 21 ; Eph. v. 5 ; 1 Cor. xv. 50 ; 2 Thess. i. 5 ; 2 Tim. iv. 1-18 ; 2 Pet. i. 11 ; Acts xiv. 22. Those expositors, accordingly, who, like Koppe, and Keil, understood by the βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, Christ's kingdom in the world to come, take what is certainly a partial view ; still, however, they have more truth on their side than their opponents. But it was a very awkward evasion of the contrary texts to which they had recourse, when they, moreover, added that "sometimes the term likewise denotes the institutions preparatory to God's kingdom in the world to come," and expounded such passages as Mark xii. 34, as follows : 'Thou art upon the right way to the kingdom of God hereafter.' They would have done much better to allow that the βασιλεία is unquestionably represented in the New Testament as already come, although but in its commencement. The kingdom of God hereafter has in fact become existent in time, by the appearance in human nature of him, who could say of himself, 'I always do the things that please the Father.' He who is the king is likewise the first citizen of the kingdom of God ; and if we interpret the ἐντός in the text Luke xvii. 21, *among*, which is the right way, then Christ himself declares, that with his person God's kingdom in eternity first became a kingdom in time. He commands us, moreover, daily to pray that his kingdom may come ; and the more that that life which is in him is diffused among mankind, the more do they cease to be disobedient subjects of God. As now present, the kingdom of God is represented in Matth. xi. 12 ; xii. 28 ; xvi. 9 ; Mark xii. 34 ; Luke xvi. 16 ; xvii. 20 ; and in the Epistles, Rom. xiv. 17 ; 1 Cor. iv. 20 ; Col. i. 13 ; iv. 11 ; Heb. xii. 28. Now, when we consider that thus both the first Gospels and Paul represent the kingdom of God as future and yet at the same time speak of it as having already come, we perceive a remarkable point of coincidence between them and John with respect to the doctrine which has ever

been regarded as peculiar to that apostle; viz., That life eternal commences here in time.'

"After thus defining the βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, we learn how the βασιλεία τοῦ Χριστοῦ and the βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν in Matthew are to be explained. The kingdom of Christ denotes just the reign of God, conceived as carried on through the mediation of Christ.² Hence the more power God acquires over us, and the more we become his children, the more does the Son deliver up³ the kingdom to the Father, until that full delivery, whereof St. Paul speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 28. οὐρανοί is not, according to the Rabbinical *usus loquendi*, synonymous with God,⁴ but denotes the world that lies beyond, and is elevated above, the present sphere of time and sense. Some passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews are explanatory of this, particularly c. xii., and the expression of St. Paul, ἡ ἄνω ἱερουσαλήμ.

"In order fully to elucidate the idea, we should now necessarily require to enter upon a similar consideration of the terms which are in various respects analogous: αἰὼν μέλλον, οἰκουμένη μέλλουσα, ἐκκλησία. This however would carry us too far."—THOLUCK.

NOTE B, p. 215.

"*Ῥακά*, from the Syriac ܪܟܐ, which is from the Hebrew ַרַּק, meaning an empty, insignificant, worthless fellow. *Μωρέ*, from the Hebrew מורע, which signifies a rebellious man—an apostate; a more bitter term of reproach than the former. Both these terms should be preserved in a translation, as they were used in a general and indecisive acceptance. The latter word, *Μωρέ*, from being rendered in an expression by no means equivalent, has occasioned embarrassment to some, as our Saviour

¹ "The two passages in which this Evangelist mentions the βασιλεία τοῦ Θεοῦ, iii. 3; xviii. 36, have been usually referred to the life hereafter, but unjustly; the latter merely affirms that the dominion of Christ did not take its rise from the relations of the present life—οὐκ ἔστιν ἡ τοῦ κόσμου ταύτου—and hence is not in its appearance like an earthly government. Luke xvii. 20, is a parallel."

² J. Gerhard's *Loci Theologici*, Tom. xx. p. 122, 123.

³ *παρεδωκέναι*, restore, bring back. Vide "Storr, De not. cæl. reg." *Opusc.* i. 274, 275.—J. B.

⁴ Baumgarten Crusius, *Bibl. Theologie*. p. 151.

himself calls the Pharisees 'fools;' Matth. xxiii. 17, 19; and employs the word on other occasions, and so does his Apostle Paul." "In a treatise of Maimonides, 'concerning offences of ignorance and inadvertency,' iii. 7, 'the man who commits a sin in direct violation of the law of God, and in perverse opposition to his express will, is called מורד, a rebel or an apostate—a term implying the highest enormity, and most aggravated guilt. What a mortal antipathy the Jews bore against an apostate from their religion, may be seen from the conduct of Mattathias, as related in the first book of Maccabees and Joseph. Antiq. Jud. xii. 8.'"—WAKEFIELD.

"It seems odd, that when the Jews had been just before reprimanded for calling any one Raka, a Syriac term of reproach, they should here be warned against calling him μωπὲ, *thou fool*, as more aggravating. There is not that scale in the crime as in the punishment. Nay, μωπὲ in Greek, does not signify so much as Raka in Syriac; and therefore should not be interpreted at all any more than Raka, or at least should not have been interpreted by the Greek word μωπὲ, *thou fool*. It is properly Syriac, and comes from the Hebrew מרוד, which signifies rebellious, stubborn, apostate. Deut. xxi. 18, 20; Numb. xx. 10; Psal. xxviii. 23."—SYKES. "This observation is certainly just."—Dr HENRY OWEN. BISHOP PEARCE also accords with this exegesis.

NOTE C, p. 242.

"The question, whether a really absolute universality and literal fulfilment pertain to these words, must be determined, first, from *the whole christian doctrine*, then from *the connection*, and in fine, from *other declarations* of Scripture, especially Christ's own behaviour, and that of his disciples.

"In regard to the first of these topics, it may be said as follows:—The Christian in the perfected state, is the child of his heavenly Father;¹ and, consequently, *κοινωνὸς τῆς θείας φύσεως*, 2 Pet. i. 4. Goodness in him, must hence resemble that of his original, and

¹ See ver. 45, and p. 145, &c.

thus his love bear the character of the love of God. The love of God, however, is always accompanied with holiness and wisdom, and being so, it stands in its relation to evil, not merely in an attitude of defence, but also of restraint and punishment, partly, according to the inward necessity of the Divine nature, partly for the good of the sinner himself, and partly for the advantage of human society. In the same way, then, the love of the Christian in relation to evil must not manifest merely passive submission, except in such measure as not to compromise the honour and holiness of God among men, in the first place; the good of the sinner in the second; and, in fine, the interests of human society. On the contrary, when this is the case, even the Christian's love in relation to evil, must become restraining and punitive. Considering, however, that in a community, the exercise of this restraining and punitive love cannot be conceded to every individual, inasmuch as the individual wants the power, or, by reason of excited passion, the wisdom requisite, the office of punitive love has, by Divine appointment, been devolved upon the *magistracy*, in which those qualities necessary for its exercise are united, and has continued with individuals, as *e. g.* with the father of a family, only in such measure as the magistracy invests them with.¹ Thus, viewed with reference to the whole system of christian truth, our saying acquires the following import: 'To such an extent ought ye, my disciples, to be free from the desire of revenge, as that, except where the honour of God, and the good of your injurer and the community, exact of you the contrary, you ought, in patient self-denial, to do more than even what insolence demands from you.'

"To this restriction, the *context* is at least not opposed, for the aim of the precept is not to limit the *punishment* of the wicked, but the *desire of vengeance* in Christ's disciples. Nay, that the restriction much rather emanates from the spirit of Christianity, will be established by other Biblical declarations. Here we have chiefly to consider the kind of way in which the Apostle Paul expresses himself, in the particular passages where he delivers admonitions referring to the commandments of Christ. At 1 Cor. vi. 7, he

¹ This is a questionable theory.—J. B.

does not call it a παράπτωμα of the Corinthian Church, that they had gone to law with one another, but a ἥτημα. Διὰ τί, says he, οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἀδικεῖσθε . . . ἀλλὰ ὑμεῖς ἀδικεῖτε . . . καὶ ταῦτα ἀδελφούς. Here the precept of Christ appears, in that less harsh form in which every reader of sound sense takes it up at the first approach, with an οὐχὶ μᾶλλον. With this we have to conjoin the well known dict. prob. in Paul and Peter, respecting the magistracy: Θεοῦ διάκονός ἐστιν, ἑκδικῶς εἰς ὀργὴν τῷ τὸ κακὸν πράσσοντι; and moreover, the passages where Jesus permits his followers to withdraw from persecution by *flight*.

“As regards *Christ's own behaviour*, and that of the apostles, we have, John xviii. 23, the example, that when he was smitten upon the cheek, he does not literally fulfil the precept; but, on the contrary, asks of him who did the violence, ‘If I have spoken well, why smitest thou me?’ Paul, too, everywhere acts in such a way, as to recognise the punitive office of the magistrate, and when exposed to injustice, in place of suffering patiently, appeals to them, Acts xvi. 35–40; xxii. 23–29; xxv. 9–11.”—THOLUCK.

NOTE D, p. 247.¹

Chrysostom's view of the course of thought in this paragraph is finely conceived, and most felicitously expressed. “Εἶδες δσους ἀνέβη βαθμούς, καὶ πῶς εἰς αὐτὴν ἡμᾶς τὴν κορυφὴν ἔστησε τῆς ἀρετῆς; σκόπει δὲ ἄνωθεν ἀριθμῶν· πρῶτός ἐστι βαθμὸς, μὴ ἀρχεῖν ἀδικίας· δεύτερος, μετὰ τὸ ἀρξασθαι, τὸν ἀδικοῦντα τοῖς ἴσοις μὴ ἀμύνεσθαι· τρίτος, μὴ δρᾶσαι τὸν ἐπηρεάζοντα ταῦτα ἀ ἔπαθεν, ἀλλ' ἡσυχάσαι· τέταρτος, τὸ καὶ παρασχεῖν ἑαυτὸν εἰς τὸ παθεῖν κακῶς· πέμπτος, τὸ καὶ πλέον παρασχεῖν, ἢ ἐκεῖνος βούλεται ὁ ποιήσας· ἕκτος, τὸ μὴ μισῆσαι τὸν ταῦτα ἐργαζόμενον· ἑβδομος, τὸ καὶ ἀγαπῆσαι· ὀγδοός, τὸ καὶ εὐεργετῆσαι· ἔνατος, τὸ καὶ Θεὸν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ παρακαλεῖν· εἶδες ὕψος φιλοσοφίας;” “Do you observe the scale he has ascended, and how he has placed us upon the pinnacle of virtue? Contemplate the enumeration from the beginning. The first step is, not to begin injuring; the second, after injury has been done, not to

¹ By inadvertence on the part of the Author, no reference to this note appears in the text. It refers to p. 247, line 6 from the bottom.

retaliate like for like upon the injurer; the third, not to inflict the same on the offender that one has suffered, but to be quiet; the fourth, to yield ourself to suffer evil; the fifth, to yield more than he who did the evil wishes; the sixth, not to hate him who did such things; the seventh, even to love him; the eighth, to do him good; the ninth, to pray to God for him. Do you mark the summit of philosophy?"

NOTE E, p 279.

"On the richness of the contents of this prayer, Tertullian, in his day, expresses himself with great force, 'De orat.' c. 1: 'Brevitas ista . . . magnæ ac beatæ interpretationis substantia fulta est, quantumque substringitur verbis, tantum diffunditur sensibus, neque enim propria tantum orationis officia complexa est, venerationem Dei, aut hominis petitionem, sed omnem pœne sermonem Domini, omnem commemorationem disciplinæ, ut revera in oratione *breviarium totius Evangelii comprehendatur*.'

"We must beware of underlaying with logical schemes, according to the forms of the school, the discourses of the Lord and his apostles. In the language of God to mankind, sounding from the kingdom of grace, equally with that which addresses us from the kingdom of nature, an order of a loftier kind than the formally logical prevails. Just at the point where the square of our logic will no longer fit, commence the confines of a higher realm. The discourses of men of God do not need to be dressed into French gardens by the scholastic shears of a Lampe and a Baumgarten, in order to acquire order and connection. They are like an English park, where grove and meadow variously alternate, but where, through all the seeming confusion, the law of beauty and order of a higher sort is yet maintained. It would, however, be running into extremes on the opposite side, were we to discard every proof of a strict logical arrangement.

"This prayer contains a sacred heptad of petitions, which separate into two halves. The first expresses God's relation towards us, the latter our relation towards God. The three opening peti-

tions unfold gradually one thought : 1. God must be acknowledged to be what he is ; 2. Then does he reign over man ; 3. Thereby will the earth be at last glorified into the kingdom of heaven. In like manner, the four last petitions contain a progression which runs parallel. Supplication begins with what is inferior, entreating first for earthly necessities, and then for spiritual blessings : 1. for the removal of past guilt ; 2. for protection from guilt to come ; 3. for final deliverance from all sin and evil.¹ Hereupon is appended an epilogue, belonging, indeed, to a later period, but exceedingly well suited to the place it occupies, and which, once more in a triad, states the grounds of the Christian's assurance of faith. This train of ideas is set forth, still more strictly arranged, in the following scheme by Dr Weber, in the program of 1828, to which we have referred.

Πρόλογος.	Λόγος.		Ἐπίλογος.
	εὐχαί.	αἰτήματα.	
1) πάτερ.	1) ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου.	1) τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τον ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον.	1) ὅτι σοῦ ἐσ- τιν ἡ βα- σιλεία.
2) ἡμῶν.	2) ἐλθέτω ἡ βα- σιλεία σου.	2) καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα κτλ.	2) σοῦ ἐστιν ἡ δύναμις.
3) ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς.	3) γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου κτλ.	3) καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμὸν κτλ.	3) σοῦ ἐστιν ἡ δόξα.

The first *εὐχή* and the first *αἴτημα* Dr Weber refers to theology, the second *εὐχή* and *αἴτημα* to Christology, the third *εὐχή*, with the third *αἴτημα*, to pneumatology, or angelology and demonology. It is more correct to say, that the disposition of these petitions is founded in the economy of Father, Son, and Spirit, which economy here, as is also often the case elsewhere, appears as the deeper basis of our logical order of the triad. The *acknowledgment of the nature of the Godhead* as holy, relates mainly to the *Father*, as the *ἀρχή*. His *reign* in mankind is carried on through

¹ Bengel : Tres reliquæ rogationes spectant vitæ spiritualis in mundo initium, progressum, exitum, rogantesque continentur non solum de sua indigentia, sed etiam de reatu, periculo et angustiis. Quum hæc amota sunt, Deus est illis omnia in omnibus, per rogationes tres primas. Compare Augustine and Calvin.

the mediation of the *Son*. It attains its *completion* through the *Spirit*, in which the Father and Son preside in the church, so that the Divine will is executed upon earth as it is in heaven. In the same way, the *support of the bodily* existence relates to the 'opus creationis et conservationis,' consequently, chiefly to the economy of the *Father*, the *doing away of the guilt of sin*, to the economy of the *Son*, protection from the power of temptation, and *ultimate subjective* redemption from evil, to the economy of the *Spirit*."—THOLUCK.

"Considered as a whole, our Lord's prayer contains only *one* thought, or idea, the longing after the kingdom of God,¹ to which all the prayers of the children of God (as those whom Jesus here teaches to pray) aspire. But this one idea must be viewed as having *two* references; *first*, with regard to the relation of God to men, which is expressed in the three first petitions, which represent the kingdom of God as still perfecting itself, wherein that which is God's highest object is uttered in the form of a wish; *secondly*, with regard to the relation of men to God, which is expressed in the four last petitions, in which are reviewed the obstacles to the progress of the kingdom of God. In the *first* part, therefore, the discourse begins with the riches of God.

"*Thy* Name be hallowed,

"*Thy* Kingdom come,

"*Thy* Will be done.

"In the *second* part, on the contrary, it commences with the poverty of man.

"*Us* give daily bread,

"*Us* forgive our debts,

"*Us* lead not into temptation,

"*Us* deliver from evil.

"In the very significant doxology is expressed the certain hope that the prayer will be heard, a hope which is founded on the nature of the unchangeable God himself, who, as the highest good, will realise the good at his appearance (the kingdom of God)."—OLSHAUSEN.

¹ Luther, therefore, justly says: "The true Christian says an *everlasting* 'Our Father,' namely, in so far as all his longing is concentrated in the idea of the kingdom of God."

It is impossible to express in too strong terms, pity and disapprobation at the want of spiritual perspicacity and sensibility, and the impious arrogance, manifested in the judgments given of this prayer, by two rationalist German theologians, Schulz and Möller.

The former theologian is of opinion that "The want of all coherence and all natural connection between the several petitions, which could scarcely be excused in a supplicant praying with the most unbridled fancy, far less in one so reflective and considerate as Jesus, makes it impossible to suppose that the prayer forms a connected whole."¹ And Möller, says "In short, the moment we regard the prayer as connected, we perceive in it so many defects, that one does not understand why Jesus did not deliver something more perfect"!!

The best expositions of this prayer we are acquainted with, are to be found in "Chemnitii Harmonia Evang.," Tom. I.; "Amyraldi Exercit.;" and "Witsii Exercit. Sac.," of which we have, what is a very uncommon thing, a really good translation by my esteemed friend, the Rev. William Pringle. Augustine's short commentary, and Nösselt's notes in his "Exercitationes," are worth consulting. Stapfer's and Brunning's learned and ingenious dissertations, in the first and second volumes of the "Tempe Helvetica," are curiosities of their kind. These good men find all the minute particulars of a very artificial system, and all the leading events of the future history of the christian church, in this simple prayer. I am afraid, they have rather put them into, than drawn them out of, it. The brief exposition of the Lord's prayer, in the Westminster Assembly's Shorter Catechism, is admirable. That in their Larger Catechism is excellent also, only not a few very sincere Christians would rather deprecate than supplicate, as they direct us to do under the second petition, that "the church should be maintained by the civil magistrates." The Reverend David Dun-

¹ "Schulz supposes that the prayer is to be taken up as follows:—'When you want to make a prayer of adoration to the Father of universal nature, thus speak, O thou, who art our Father, and the Father of all thy creatures, highly exalted, let thy praise be our continual employment.' 2. 'Or when you wish to pray for the acceleration of the commencement of my religion, speak . . . ' 3. 'Or when you wish to pray to God for the utmost happiness of mankind, consisting in the willing observance of his precepts, say . . . '"

can's little volume deserves to have for its motto, "Multum in Parvo."

Some learned interpreters—among the rest Lightfoot, in his "Horæ Hebraicæ et Talmudicæ;" Witsius, in his "Exercitationes Sacræ;" Schöttgen, in his "Horæ Hebraicæ;" Vitringa, in his work "De Synagoga;" and Wetstein, in his "Commentary,"—have endeavoured to show, that in this prayer are many forms of expression, which the Jews of that age were accustomed to use in their prayers. Some have even gone so far as to hold, that the whole of the petitions are to be found word for word nearly in the liturgies which it is supposed the Jews about this period began to use in their synagogues. With regard to this question, I am much disposed to acquiesce in the opinion of the judicious and eloquent Vernede:—"Divers sçavans ont soutenu qu'il jugea à propos d'en emprunter tous les articles des anciennes liturgies des Juifs, ou des écrits des docteurs de cette nation. Mais d'abord on auroit de la peine à prouver que dès lors il y eut des liturgies universellement reçues dans cette eglise. De plus, il est certain que plusieurs des ouvrages, auxquels on en appelle, sont postérieurs à l'ère chrétienne: Et les passages qu'on en produit en preuve n'ont rien moins qu'une conformité exacte et frappante; quelquefois n'ont qu'un rapport assés éloigné avec ceux qu'on prétend en avoir été deduits. Ainsi nous ne sçaurions adopter cette hypothèse."—*Sermons sur le discours sur la montagne*.—Vol. III., Ser. XXII., pp., 42, 43.

NOTE F, p. 296.

"The Epilogue, Ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία κ.τ.λ. The authenticity of these words, has been strongly assailed by criticism. Taking the data as they at present lie before us, we, too, can do nothing else than decide against their genuineness, inclusively of the ἀμήν. Were we, however, to proceed entirely upon internal evidences in answering the question, our verdict would certainly be very different. Nothing could be a greater mistake than for Wetstein to think of demonstrating the spuriousness of the epilogue from the circumstance, that it puts the 14th verse too

far from the first petition, which, however, it should help to elucidate, as if the sixth and seventh petitions did not intervene to separate them—and further, by saying, that, when coupled with the sixth petition, the words appear inapposite, and, when referred back to the three first, tautological. Much more does this epiphonema finely express the foundation of hope, on which all the prayers of the suppliant rest, so that we acquiesce entirely in the opinion of Calvin, who says of the clause: ‘Tam apte quadrat. Neque enim,’ he proceeds, ‘ideo solum addita est, ut corda nostra ad expetendam Dei gloriam accendat, et admoneat, quisnam esse debeat votorum nostrorum scopus, sed etiam ut doceat, preces nostras, quæ hic nobis dictatæ sunt, non alibi, quam in Deo solo fundatas esse, ne propriis meritis nitamur.’ Bengel, however, comes to the aid of the Latin codices, which omit the words, with the observation drawn deep from the spirit of Christianity: ‘Celebamus eum (patrem cœlestem) tali fere modo, quo peregrinantes et militantes contenti esse debemus. Ubi ad metam pervenerit universitas filiorum Dei, mera fiet in cœlo doxologia: venit regnum ejus, facta est voluntas ejus, remisit nobis peccata, &c.; præsertim tempori illi, quo Dominus hanc formulam discipulis præscripsit, convenientior erat rogatio, quam hymnus. Jesus nondum erat glorificatus,’ &c. But in this observation, the point is overlooked upon which most depends, viz., that we have here, according to Heumann’s correct remark, the doxology under an *aitiological* form. It is not a burst of emotion swelling over into a hymn. It is much more an intensified ἀμὴν, specifying the basis upon which the suppliant places his confidence. The internal evidences, accordingly, could not make us at all dubious of the authenticity of the words—barring the single circumstance, that the order of the three predicates βασιλεία, δύναμις and δόξα would correspond better with the three triads of petitions, if the δύναμις stood *before* the βασιλεία. It is evidence of an external kind which determines the point.

“The critical proofs of the spuriousness of the passage are to be found developed in Bengel, Appar. crit. p. 459, Jac. Breiting, Museum Helvet. XI. 370. XVI. 591. XVIII. 719, in Wetstein and Griesbach’s Comment. crit. p. 68, sqq., from the

two last of which Rödiger has collected them, enlarged by some remarks, in the third appendix to his Ed. of Griesbach's Synopsis. We confine ourselves here to a statement of the main results. 1. To be sure, a very few, but these the most eminent Greek codices, as the Cod. Vat. and Cantab. omit them. The Cod. Alex. is defective just at this place. The most of these codices are of western origin. That the words were wanting in them, is corroborated by the Latin translation, and by the most ancient Latin fathers. Neither Tertullian nor Cyprian, nor Jerome (who yet retains the Amen), nor Augustine read this doxology. Tertullian expressly calls the sixth petition the *clausula* of the prayer. 2. The Alexandrine codices, moreover, did not contain the words, and they are wanting in Origen and in the Coptic version. 3. In other authorities they are also missing, in the Arabic translation of the ed. Rom. of the four Evangelists, of 1591, from which the Paris and London Polyglott has borrowed them, and in the Persic translation, edited by Whelock from three Persic codices in 1652, in Cyrill of Jerusalem, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus and Cæsarius. Euthymius reproaches the Bogomilians with rejecting the *ἐπιφώνημα* of the Lord's prayer, *appended by the fathers of the church*: τὸ παρὰ τῶν θείων φωστήρων καὶ τῆς ἐκκλησίας καθηγητῶν προστεθὲν ἀκροτελεύτιον ἐπιφώνημα—τὸ ὅτι σου ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δόξα τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος, οὐδὲ ἀκοῦσαι ἀνέχονται. 4. As the practice gradually crept in of supplementing the less, from the more complete, reports of Christ's sayings, what Matthew contains over and above what is given by Luke, was likewise added to the text of the Lord's prayer in the latter evangelist. Nevertheless, the doxology is wanting in it, according to all the codices. 5. It is, moreover, easy to make it appear how the addition could have arisen. Even among the Jews responses were customary. In the public recitation of prayers, the people pronounced either an amen, or a doxology similar to that which we find, 1 Chron. xxix. 11. This practice of antiphonies was translated into the christian church, and, what is very remarkable, we are even able to point out the progressive steps by which the epilogue attained its present form. In one passage of the Constit. Apost. l. VII. c. 24, we find the Lord's prayer

with the shorter doxology, *ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας ἀμήν*, whereas in another, l. III. c. 18, the formula is complete. Thus the Sahidic, or Upper Egyptian version, reads the abbreviated formula, *ἡ δύναμις καὶ τὸ κράτος*. See Cramer's 'Beiträge zur Beförderung,' &c. Th. III. p. 60. The doxology underwent a still greater enlargement, after the fifth century, at which time, the allusion to the trinity, that became ever more and more frequent in liturgical formulas, appears. Thus cod. 157 and 225, in Griesbach have, after *δόξα*, the addition *τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ υἱοῦ καὶ τοῦ ἁγίου πνεύματος*, and it is to this that Lucian's *Philopatris*, c. 27, seems to allude, where it says, *τὴν εὐχὴν ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς ἀρξάμενος, καὶ τὴν πολυώνυμον ᾧδὴν εἰς τέλος ἐπιθεῖς*. Hence the ed. Complut. in its day, and afterwards Erasmus and Beza, express the conjecture, that the formula has passed over into the text of the New Test., from the usage of the liturgies. In the same way, in the 'Ave Maria,' the 'quia peperisti servatorem animarum nostrarum,' was appended to the 'benedicta tu in mulieribus.' In the same way, too, do our ministers extend, in a variety of modes, the Mosaic benediction; and thus, in the Romish church, 'per Iesum Christum dominum nostrum,' was frequently annexed to the 'libera nos a malo' of the Lord's prayer itself. Besides those we have already specified at p. 414, the following older authors have regarded the words as spurious:—Zwinglius (not Calvin), Œcolampadius, Pellicanus, Bucer, Melancthon, Camerarius, Drusius, Schultetus, Walton, Grotius, Mill, Grabe, M. Pfaff, whom almost all moderns follow. Luther, too, has passed over the doxology in both of his Catechisms.

"Among the advocates for the authenticity of the formula, we have to name Wolf, Olearius, Witsius, Heumann, S. J. Baumgarten 'de auth. doxol.' Halæ, 1753, Heinr. Benzenberg in the 'Symbolæ Duisb.' 1784, T. II. P. 1, p. 97, Matthäi in the 'Anm. zu s. N. T.,' Weber, in the dissertation already referred to. All that they produce in favour of their opinion, however, can never be brought into comparison with the facts already stated. Benzenberg enters most minutely into the subject; but the shifts to which he has recourse, some of them of a very violent character, have already found an opponent in the editor of the 'Symb.,' the learned P. Berg. The witness of greatest weight in favour of

the authenticity, is doubtless the Peschito. The three Syrian translations, viz., the Peschito, the Philoxenian, and the Jerusalem, contain the doxology. The two last, as belonging to a later date, cannot here be taken into consideration. With regard to the authority of the Peschito, however, even it is not above the suspicion of certain interpolations or additions by the Lectionaries. The passages in it, by which this is evinced, have been collected by Griesbach, 'Meletemata de vetustis textus N. T. recensionibus,' p. li. The Æthiopic, Armenian, and Gothic versions, along with the Arab. Erp. and the Persic in the London Polyglott, did not take their origin prior to the fourth century, and hence possess no force as evidence. Matthäi insists that it was Origen who first introduced the depravation into the text, for which assumption, however, there is a total want of plausible proof; and he fancies he can annihilate the authority of the Vulgate by 1 John v. 7. For just as at that passage, the Latins have, for doctrinal reasons, made an addition, so, on grounds liturgical, did they *proprio Marte* banish the words in question from the Greek Text. 'Nov. Test. Græce,' T. I. p. 23. II. p. 297. Whereas, on the contrary, Bengel found in our passage no slender confirmation of the partial opinion he entertained of the Latin version, in order the more powerfully to justify his favourite text, 1 John v. 7. But even were Matthäi successful in setting aside the authority of the Vulgate, that is by no means the sole evidence for the omission of the passage. Benzenberg goes still more arbitrarily to work, endeavouring to raise a suspicion that all the ecclesiastical fathers who omit the words, have been corrupted by the Paris editors, into conformity with the Vulgate!

"Now, even although we should, on the grounds advanced, discard this doxology from the text, it will still maintain its place undisputed in the use of the church. For, if we only have not, as above shown, to restrict ourselves scrupulously to the precise words of the prayer, as if it were a magical formula, we are at liberty to extend it. Now, that the extension here presented to us in the doxology, has been made entirely in the spirit of the Lord, is what can in nowise be called in question."—THOLUCK.

NOTE F, pp. 296, 355.

"Augustine observes how those who are addressed here as 'being evil,' are the very same into whose mouths but just now the Lord has put that word, 'Our Father;' to whom he has made the promise, 'Ask and it shall be given you;' so that every faithful, i. e., believing man, has a double aspect, he is 'evil' through his old nature, he is good through participation with him who is the highest good, who is in some sense the alone good (Matth. xix. 17), the good in himself, and altogether good, while others are good through him, and only as they are sharers of his life. So that we may perceive here, that he has seized the right interpretation of the 'being evil,' which they fail to catch who take the epithet 'evil,' not as the designation of all men, of human nature in general (Gen. viii. 21), as it is opposed to the goodness and holiness of God, but of some particular men deeper sunken in corruption than the rest; as if Christ would say, even the worst among you (even the *πονηροί*), do not extend their malignity to their children, but in their relations to them show themselves bountiful and good. But the other is the truer and deeper explanation, embracing the whole race of man under this charge of evil, who, being such, have yet natural affections, the yearnings of a parent's heart towards their children, and, according to their ability and knowledge, impart unto them good gifts, which, if not in the highest degree deserving the title of 'good,' are yet good for the necessities of the present life. How much more certainly will the heavenly Father impart the true goods of his kingdom, for it is those that the Lord has prominently in his eye, as is plainly shown by a comparison with the parallel passage in St Luke (xi. 13), where, instead of 'good things,' it is his 'Holy Spirit,' which is promised to them who ask. This view of the reference and meaning of *πονηροί* will come clearly out, if we note how *τίς ἐξ ὑμῶν ἄνθρωπος* is not pleonastic, as we make it, 'What man of you;' but there is a silent opposition between the *ἄνθρωπος* here, and the *πατήρ ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς* of verse 11; 'Who of you, though he be but a man,' &c.; and the being but a man, will plainly appear equal to *πονηρὸς ὤν*."—TRENCH.

ADDITIONAL NOTE ON MATTHEW V. 3, 5, 7, 8.

The following remarks on four of the beatitudes are just and beautiful. "Happiness or rest of soul, our Divine Saviour well knew, was the great object of man, and to this, therefore, he ever applies himself. '*Happy*,' says he, 'are the poor in spirit; *happy* are the meek; *happy* are the merciful; *happy* are the pure in heart.' The plainness and simplicity of these sayings may lead the superficial to overlook their force and fullness. But if ever there was weight of sentiment and language, it is here; or if ever truth was rendered attractive by the mode of exhibition, it is in these instances. It is common to inculcate good temper and right conduct, as matter of duty; but here they are pressed upon us as the ingredients of inward happiness. And on a moment's calm reflection, do we not ourselves see them to be so? Humility is the parent of contentment, because it restrains all arrogance of demand, all exorbitance of desire. It fits a man to his situation, and makes him content with what he hath. Meekness consists in equability of temper, in gentleness of mind, in immoveable self-possession. Is not this itself a security for happiness? for how many of the miseries of life do we clearly see arising from the want of this invaluable temper? Mercifulness, too, is another great component of happiness. We are made for action and for society; and what can so secure to us the happiness of active and social beings, as a taste for, and a delight in, doing good? 'It blesteth him that gives, and him that takes,' says a great master of human nature. But a far greater master has carried it still higher. 'It is,' said he, 'more blessed to give than to receive.' Purity of heart, implies a superiority of soul to everything low and brutish, to everything selfish and mean, a freedom from little views and sinister ends, and, on the contrary, a relish and love of everything really great and good. This our Redeemer places next after mercy, because it is necessary to the reality, as well as the duration, of mercy: a wrong end spoiling the temper as surely as it warps the principles; on which St James has given the noblest comment, when he says, that 'the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be en-

treated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy ;' a sentence which deserves to be written in letters of gold."—ALEXANDER KNOX, *Remains*, III., 386, 387.

CORRIGENDUM, p. 270.

The statement that probably there was not another Christian present with Paul, to make his devotional exercises social, when he "gave thanks to God in the presence of the ship's company," is a *mis-statement*. From Acts xxvii. 2, it appears that "Aristarchus, a Macedonian of Thessalonica," was with him, and the whole narrative bears abundant evidence to its writer, Luke, being a witness of the facts he relates respecting that eventful voyage. Even had he not used the first person plural, there is a minuteness and picturesqueness which nothing but *αὐτοψία* could have given to the story. The same characters remarkably belong to the narrative of the journey to Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 13-35, which gives probability to the conjecture that Luke, who keeps himself much in the shade, was Cleopas' companion on that occasion. The reader, it is hoped, will pardon the inadvertence which alone could have occasioned the mistake thus acknowledged and corrected.

EXPOSITION V.

FAITHFUL DENUNCIATIONS.

LUKE XI. 37-54.

MILDNESS of disposition and gentleness of demeanour were striking features in the character and conduct of Jesus Christ. No malignant passion disturbed the tranquillity of his bosom, no intemperate rudeness ruffled the even tenor of his behaviour. Affectionate to his friends, forgiving to his enemies, condescending to the poor, compassionate to the miserable, courteous to all men, he exhibited a perfect pattern of those amiable virtues, which, if generally cultivated and exemplified, would produce so happy a transformation on the state of human society. He did "not strive nor cry, neither was his voice heard in the streets. A bruised reed he did not break, and the smoking flax he did not quench." To instruct the ignorant, to warn the unwary, to comfort the sorrowful, to relieve the afflicted, were the employments most congenial to his dispositions; and in these and similar exercises, did he spend the period of his residence among mortals. Malignity was a feeling to which he was entirely a stranger. The unparalleled sufferings to which he was exposed excited in him no desire of revenge. Instead of hating his enemies, he pitied them; and their

grossest insults, and most outrageous cruelties, but drew forth from him sighs for their folly and wickedness, and prayers for their pardon and salvation.

The gentleness of the Saviour's character was, however, no way akin to that weak undistinguishing good nature, which seems to survey all mankind with an equal and inactive good-will, without reference to their moral qualities. It was associated with an unconquerable detestation of moral evil in all its various forms, and an unquenchable zeal to promote the cause of holiness and of God. Accordingly, we find him unfolding, not merely the consolations, but the terrors, of religious truth; we find him speaking in alarming, as well as in soothing, accents; we find him not only promising peace, and pardon, and salvation, to him who will gladly and gratefully receive what is "freely given him of God," but declaring that a miserable eternity must be the portion of the finally impenitent, unbelieving, and disobedient.

It is one of the peculiarities of our Lord, that he unites in himself qualifications, not only different, but apparently opposite. The man, the leading feature of whose character is gentleness, is generally deficient in the sterner virtues; while, on the other hand, he who is remarkably endowed with unbending integrity, not unfrequently seems a stranger to the softer feelings of our nature, and is distinguished by a severity of deportment which goes far to make his undoubted excellencies unamiable and useless. But in the character of the Saviour, the amiable and estimable qualities, the lovely and the venerable virtues, so supported and softened each other, that his gentleness never degenerated into weakness, nor did his integrity ever assume the appearance of repulsive severity. While he pitied men's miseries, he condemned their sins; while he reproved their faults, he commiserated their sorrows.

Of the compassionate kindness of our Lord, both in word and deed, there are recorded, by the evangelists, many

beautiful examples. In the passage which now lies before us, we have a striking display of that holiness which "cannot bear them that are evil"¹—that integrity which knows not how to palliate sin, or flatter the sinner. The severe reproof, and indignant reprobation, of men distinguished for their wealth, their rank, their learning, and their reputation for sanctity, which these words breathe, may, on a cursory view, appear scarcely compatible with the declaration of our Lord, that he was "meek, and lowly in heart." The incongruity is, however, merely apparent. These words are not the ebullition of mortified pride, or disappointed ambition, cloaking personal malignity under the pretence of zeal for truth and holiness. They are the expression of the loathing, which the contemplation of moral evil, in some of its vilest forms, excited in a perfectly holy mind; and a declaration, by a divinely authorised revealer of the purposes of God, of the signal punishment which is awaiting such as habitually and wilfully oppose truth, from unworthy motives, and for unworthy ends.

The Pharisees were a numerous and influential body among the Jews. Their rulers, or leading men, to whom our Lord's remarks have a primary and principal reference, were possessed of a large portion of the learning of their age and nation. They were characterised by a remarkably strict attention to the ritual of the Mosaic religion, as explained and enlarged by the traditions of the elders, and by a high degree of external decorum, and apparent sanctity of deportment and manners; and they occupied many of the most important and dignified offices connected with the teaching the laws of their nation, and the administering them both in the supreme and municipal judicatories. Owing to these circumstances, they possessed an extensive and powerful influence over the public mind; and, generally indignant at the subjugation of the holy people to a foreign, a

¹ Rev. ii. 2.

gentile, yoke, they were disposed to use that influence in procuring for them emancipation from that yoke, in the hope of bringing them more completely and securely under their own dominion.

These men seem to have hoped, when John the Baptist and Jesus appeared, that they might be converted into instruments for promoting these objects. With the fervid eloquence, and overawing severity, of the former, and with the winning manners, and miraculous powers, of the latter, what might not be expected in rousing the prostrate energies of the nation, and in realising the long fondly cherished dream of the sovereignty of the holy people over the gentile nations, under the Messiah, while the existing rulers secured a large share of the power and dignity connected with the administration of this new and better order of things ?

But when John repelled all their advances, addressed them as "a generation of vipers,"¹ and, with unsparing fidelity, exposed their hypocrisy, and denounced their doom ; when Jesus declared that, "except a man be born again, he cannot see," or enter into, "the kingdom of God;" when he proclaimed that that kingdom "came not with observation," and that, "except men's righteousness exceeded the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, they could not enter it,"² they were not only constrained to relinquish all hopes of turning such men into tools for accomplishing their object, but, perceiving that the prevalence of such sentiments must be the annihilation of their influence, and the disappointment of their hopes, they regarded them with the most inveterate dislike, and without being at all scrupulous as to the means employed, laboured to accomplish their destruction. John had already fallen a victim to the malignity of a profligate woman, practising on the easy temper of her princely paramour ; and all danger from him was, of course, at an end. But, from the

¹ Matth. iii. 7.

² John iii. 3, 5. Luke xvii. 20. Matth. v. 20.

commencement of his ministry, these crafty men seem to have discovered that Jesus was a still more formidable opponent than John ; and, believing it impracticable to bend him to their purposes, they determined, if possible, to effectuate his ruin, by making him the object of odium to the Jewish people, or of suspicion to their Roman rulers, that so, by popular tumult, or by public execution, they might free themselves from one, who would not co-operate with them, and whose growing influence could only be established on the destruction of theirs. In consequence of this, we find the agents of this powerful body dogging our Lord wherever he went. Whoever may be absent from his discourses and miracles, some of the Pharisees are sure to be there, and there with the intention to cavil and entrap, to throw suspicion upon his objects, and to misrepresent his doctrines—" Urging him vehemently, and provoking him to speak of many things, laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him."

In prosecution, it would seem, of this systematic endeavour to ruin him, after a vain attempt to raise a prejudice against him, as a degraded instrument of infernal power in the miraculous works which he performed, one of these Pharisees, pretending respect for him, invited him to partake of the hospitality of his table ; but with the design that, alone in the midst of his crafty opponents, he might be the more readily entangled in their toils ; or if, as lately, he should tear to pieces their cunningly woven nets, they might, at least, be saved from the infamy of a public exposure. With a thorough knowledge of their intentions, our Lord accepted the invitation ; and it was in these circumstances that he uttered the striking words which lie before us for consideration. Let us recollect they are the words of one who knew the heart—of one immaculately holy—of one who clearly saw all the guilt these miserable men were incurring, and all the danger in which they were involving themselves.

Let us not forget the numerous and varied methods he had employed to bring them to a better mind—"How often he would have gathered them, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings." Let us recollect all these things, and any appearance of an undue severity, little according with the general mildness of his disposition, and gentleness of his demeanour, will entirely vanish.

How far we are to consider our Lord's conduct as an example, in thus going into the company of the wicked and worldly, is a question of considerable interest. It is quite certain *he* did right in whatever he did; but it is not quite so certain that *we* would do right, were we in every case to imitate, to the letter, his conduct. He knew that, whether these men were or were not the better for his company, he could not be the worse for theirs. That is more than, in similar circumstances, we can usually be sure of. There is more probability of a Christian getting harm than doing good, when, without a very plain call in providence, he mingles in convivial intercourse with the decidedly worldly and wicked. There can be no doubt, however, that a Christian may have such a plain providential call; and, when it is so, it is his duty to obey it, trusting that He who brings him into trying circumstances, will enable him to act such a part, as will secure him from damage, and religion from reproach, and as may be useful to those with whom he is called on occasionally to associate: "If any of them that believe not bid" a Christian "to a feast, and" he be "disposed," for sufficient reasons, "to go," let him go, only let him take care that he conduct himself there like a Christian.¹ * Generally speaking, however, familiar association with the worldly and the wicked is to be avoided by Christians: "Enter not in the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men." If we would not "prac-

¹ 1 Cor. x. 27-33. * See note A.

tise wicked works with them who work iniquity," it will be wise in us not to "eat of their dainties."¹

It was an ordinary custom among the Jews to wash the hands before meals :—"For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, except they wash their hands oft, eat not, holding the tradition of the elders. And when they come from the market, except they wash, they eat not."² This, as a matter of convenience and cleanliness, was unobjectionable and proper; but they, following the traditions of the elders, seem to have considered it as a religious rite. They thought well of themselves for observing it, as if they had performed a duty; and they found fault with those who did not observe it, as if they had committed a sin.

Our Lord never manifested a diseased scrupulosity of mind—he never affected an unnecessary singularity of manners. But when he saw men elevating what is indifferent into a matter of duty, he would not, by his conduct, give countenance to any such unwarranted addition to God's law; and, accordingly, when the other guests were all performing their ablutions, according to the tradition of the elders, he, without going through any such ceremony, took his place at the table. His host, the Pharisee, observed this with surprise and displeasure, and probably manifested this by looks, or by words. Our Lord seized the opportunity of attacking the principle which lay at the foundation of this over-estimate of the importance of washing the hands before meat.

I.—THE PHARISEES CONDEMNED.

The Pharisees were characterised by their attaching the greatest importance to observances, which were either altogether unsanctioned by divine authority, or, though com-

¹ Prov. iv. 14. Psal. cxli. 4.

² Mark vii. 3, 4.

manded of God, were obviously of a secondary or subordinate kind, while they altogether omitted, or very negligently performed, the most essential duties of religion and morality. They preferred the little to the great, the external to the internal, the extrinsic to the essential; and worse than all this, they substituted the one for the other, and considered their sedulous attention to uncommanded usages, and mere instrumental duties, as giving them a dispensation from the most sacred obligations of religion and morality.

Our Lord's illustrations of truth and duty, were generally distinguished by a character of great familiarity; and were frequently borrowed from, and, as it were, suggested by, the objects which were before him at the time. Looking at the nicely clean vessels which covered the dinner-table, he said, "Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness."¹

The meaning of the whole passage depends on the manner in which you explain the phrase, rendered "your inward part."² Most interpreters have supposed it to mean, the 'inward part of the Pharisees,'—that is, their minds and hearts, their thoughts and their desires; as if our Lord had said, 'Ye are very careful of your outside, but very careless of your inside. Your bodies are very clean, but your souls are very impure; or, in appearance you are very good, but in reality you are very bad.' This was truth; and truth which, at other times, our Lord very plainly told them,—as, when he termed them, "whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness."³ But it seems

¹ Luke xi. 39.

² Τὸ ἑσθὲν ὑμῶν. "By ἑσθὲν, we are to understand the contents of the dish as acquired by acts of wickedness."—OLSHAUSEN. Τὸ ἑσθὲν ὑμῶν. "Omnes quos vidi interpretes exponunt hæc verba *quod intra vos est*, i.e., animus vester; verum id, si quid video, cum scopo Domini, orationisque structura, omnino minus convenit."—SEGAAR.

³ Matth xxiii. 27.

quite plain, that the contrast here, is between the outside and the inside of the vessels now on the dinner-table; on the physical purity which characterised their outside, and the moral turpitude which was connected with what was in them. This is obvious from the parallel passage in Matthew. "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also."¹ "Your inward part," here, is either equivalent to "the inside of your cup and platter," or the word "your," may be joined with the following clause, thus, "the inside is full of your ravening and wickedness."²

The meaning of our Lord seems to be, 'You are very attentive to external cleanliness, but very careless of moral purity. These vessels are very carefully cleaned, but what is in these vessels? abominable pollution. They are full of "your ravening and wickedness;"' that is, 'the provisions which fill these vessels, have been procured by improper means.' Our Lord accuses the Pharisees, generally, of "devouring widows' houses;"³ of getting gain by dishonest means. 'You are very scrupulous about the cleanness of your vessels, but you are not so scrupulous about the means of having these vessels filled.'

The absurdity of their conduct in being so superstitiously scrupulous about the physical purity of their vessels, while they were so careless as to the moral purity of the means by which they were filled, is strongly asserted by our Lord in the words that follow, "Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without, make that which is within also?"⁴

¹ Matth. xxiii. 25, 26.

² "Pronomen *ὑμῶν* referri debet ad *ἀφραγῆς* et *συνέρας*, cujus generis trajectiones scriptoribus sacris pariter atque profanis haud inusitatæ sunt.—Matth. v. 16; x. 30; xiii. 16. Vide Kypké ad h. l.—KUIPHEL. Markland ap. Bowyer.

³ Matth. xxiii. 14. Mark xii. 40. Luke xx. 47.

⁴ Luke xi. 40.

From misapprehending the object of our Lord, these words have generally been misinterpreted. They have been considered as equivalent to, 'God made both the body and the soul; and if it be right to keep the body physically clean, it is still more obligatory to keep the soul morally pure. Both the body and the soul are God's work, and they ought, according to their respective natures, to be kept in good order.' But it seems obvious, that what is without, and what is within, in the fortieth verse, refer to the same thing, as the outside, and the inward part, of the thirty-ninth-verse. Indeed, in the original, they are precisely the same words; and we have seen that, in the thirty-ninth verse, the outside, is the outside of the dinner-vessels, and the inside, their contents.

The true interpretation appears to depend on the somewhat peculiar sense which the word "make" has here. It is equivalent to 'put in proper order;' that is, in the case before us, 'to make clean.' We find the word used in this way in the Septuagint, Mephibosheth is said not to have "trimmed"—literally "made,"—"his beard from the time David left Jerusalem."¹ We use the word make in a somewhat similar way,—to make a bed, is to put it in proper order for sleeping in.²

The meaning seems to be, 'How foolishly do you act in being so much taken up about the cleanliness of material things, and so little about the propriety of moral actions! Does not he who makes clean the outside, make clean the inside also? Is not a man of ordinary sense fully as careful about the cleanness of what is put into the vessel, as about the cleanness of the vessel itself? It is to little purpose that the vessel is clean, if the provision be polluted. If you would

¹ 2 Sam. xix. 24.

² This is a common classical use of the word, as Elsner, Kypké, Michælis, and Elchorn have shown. The Hebrew word, of which *scuto* is the representative, טוּט, is used in a similar way. Gen. xviii. 7; xix. 3; xxi. 8. Judges xiii. 15. 1 Sam. xxv. 18. 2 Sam. xii. 4; xlii. 10. Esther v. 12. Deut. xxi. 12. *Vide Gesenii Thesaur.*—2. d.

act consistently, and like men possessed of reason, you would be much more concerned that what fills your vessels should be free from the contamination of injustice, than that the vessels themselves should be free from physical impurity.'

The words that follow in the forty-first verse, "But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you,"¹ are, perhaps, still more difficult of interpretation than those in either of the verses which precede it. It is necessary to remark, that the phrase rendered "such things as ye have,"² literally signifies, "the things which are within;" and, when looked at in its connection, is obviously descriptive of that which is in the cup and platter, that which our Lord pronounces unclean, because procured by "ravening," that is, rapine and wickedness. It is the difficulty of making satisfactory sense out of the passage, which has led our translators to give what is, at any rate, a very unusual meaning to the phrase. Some have supposed our Lord to say, 'You may ask me, how are the things within the cup and platter to be made clean? I answer, give your ill-gotten gains in alms, and then what remains of your property, will enable you to fill your vessels with food free from pollution.' It is not, however, at all probable that our Lord would have expressed such a sentiment. He would rather have said, 'Give back to their proper owners what you have obtained by dishonest means,' than, 'give it in alms.' He would certainly never have bidden men give what was not their own to give. He hates robbery for alms, as well as for burnt-offering.

I apprehend the words are spoken in grave irony by our

¹ Luke xi. 41.

² τὰ ἐντός. "Plerique inter quos et Cl. L. Bos, τὰ ἐντός explicant, *quantum res, sive facultates ferunt, pro facultatibus*. Ego cum Belgis, aliisque malo, *quæ in poculis patinisque sunt, i. e. potum cibumque*. Tam solide hoc mihi probasse videtur Raphaelius ut extra controversiam aleam positum sit."—SKEGGE. Raphaelius' note (vol. i. p. 512-13,) is well worth reading.

Lord.¹ It is as if he had said, 'But you have an easy way of purifying what is in your vessels, however polluted it may be by the way in which it has been acquired. Give a portion of it to the poor, and "to you"—that is, in your estimation,—"all will be pure." You will sit down with an easy conscience then to the enjoyment of your ill-gotten property.'

The Pharisees had the most extravagant notions as to the merit of alms. One Talmudical writer says, "Alms preserve from sudden death, and deliver from the condemnation of hell;" and another says, "If an impious man object to you, 'If God loves the poor, why does he not feed them?' answer him, 'That by giving alms we may be delivered from the condemnation of hell.'"

The Pharisees have not been alone in supposing, that ill-gotten wealth may be purified by giving to religious, falsely so called, and charitable purposes. How many churches and hospitals, in the dark ages, were endowed on this principle; and is there not reason to fear, that there are still not unfrequent instances of men's attempting thus to bribe their consciences to silence, that they be enabled to enjoy their morally polluted possessions in peace!

Such seems to me the meaning of this somewhat obscure passage. The train of thought appears to be this, 'You are very careful about the external cleanliness of your vessels, but ye little consider that your daily food, which fills these vessels, is polluted, in consequence of its being procured by unworthy means—rapine and wickedness. You are fools: making clean the outside will not make clean the inside, which is the principal matter; and when you do set about purifying what is within, you foolishly suppose that giving a part of your ill-gotten property to the poor, will sanctify the rest.'

Our Lord proceeds to expose, still farther, the wretched

¹ This is the view taken by Drusus, Erasmus, Lightfoot, and others. "Verse 41 is evidently only to be understood ironically."—SCHLEIERMACHER.

inconsistency of the Pharisees by another instance. "But woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God : these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."¹

In the article of paying tithes, they were minutely exact. They not only paid tithes of corn, and wine, and oil, but of "mint and rue, and all manner of herbs." It is worthy of remark in passing, that this is one of a number of passages in Scripture, which go to prove, ~~that~~ the payment of tithes, though obligatory by a divine law, was yet not compulsory, but voluntary.² But while so strict in these little matters, they were very loose in great matters. They "passed over," they neglected, they transgressed, the great laws of religion and morality. "Judgment," is just equivalent to, righteousness or justice. You are guilty of fraud and dishonesty, you do not render to every man his due. You are strangers to the love of God, "with the heart and the mind, the soul and the strength." "These,"—that is, the great duties of religion and morality,—“ye ought to have done.” They ought to have been first attended to ; while, at the same time, the others, the paying tithes of "mint and rue, and all manner of herbs," "ye ought not to have left undone."³ They are duties too, though duties of a far inferior order.

The elements of human character, are in all ages the same, and the more striking combinations of these elements, are the same also. How often do we still find men admitting, generally, the obligation of God's law, yet habitually strict in some points, and habitually loose in others, and apparently cherishing the hope, that their attention to one set of duties will compensate for their neglect of others. Wo, everlasting wo, will be to all such persons. The whole law has the same authority,—the authority of the "one Lawgiver,

¹ Luke xi. 42.

² "It seems that the people were left to their own consciences in regard to the just payment of these tithes."—KITTO'S "Cyclopædia."

³ "This admonition was, while yet the Mosaic laws were not all expired by the 'Consummation est.'"—SELDEN. *Vide* Matth. v. 18.

who is able to save and to destroy.”¹ What he has not commanded, has no authority at all, and obedience in such a case is not duty, but whatever he has commanded, is equally obligatory ; and he who trifles with such obligation in any case, does it at his everlasting hazard. His partial obedience is an acknowledgment of the authority of the law and the lawgiver, and will be adduced in evidence against him in judgment. The partial payment will be employed as proof of the whole debt. Out of his own mouth he will be judged. Why did he pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin ? The answer is, God commanded it ;—well then, why did he neglect judgment and the love of God ? Did God not command these also ? Men attend public ordinances, and say it is because they are of divine appointment ? but why do they live in the neglect of secret prayer ? Has he not commanded that also ? This they ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone.

Want of consistency, is the fatal fault of the religion of vast multitudes besides the Pharisees. Happy is that man, who can, with an enlightened mind, and a safe conscience, say, “I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right ; and I hate every false way.” Let this be the sincere and fervent prayer of us all. “Let my heart be sound in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.”²

Our Lord now proceeds to reprove the Pharisees, and to declare, that a woe rests on them for their extreme desire for worldly distinction and honour. “Woe unto you, Pharisees ! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets.”³ The idea is more fully brought out in the parallel passage in the twenty-third chapter of the gospel by Matthew, where a discourse of similar import, but delivered at another time, is recorded. “They love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.”⁴

¹ James iv. 12.

³ Luke xi. 43.

² Psal. cxix. 128, 80.

⁴ Matth. xxiii. 6, 7.

The uppermost seats in the synagogue were appropriated to the rulers, so that "to love the uppermost seats in the synagogue," may be equivalent to—to have an eager desire to possess special power, honour, and authority. The synagogues were fashioned in imitation of the temple, with a central erection supported by pillars, and a space surrounding it. In the centre of this, a place was prepared for reading the law and the prophets—an elevated platform, next to which were the seats for the rulers, which were raised above the other seats. There can be no doubt that the words, thus understood, were very descriptive of the Pharisees. But as it is not improbable that the Pharisees our Lord was addressing were *all* rulers, perhaps "the uppermost seats" here may refer to the highest of the seats appropriated to the rulers—the highest of the uppermost seats. For those who were rulers to occupy the seats set apart for them was in no degree wrong, but to be eager to get the most honourable of these seats showed a very vain-glorious mind. This is self-idolatry, which, as Mr Henry says, is "bad anywhere, but especially in the synagogues. There to seek honour to ourselves, where we come to give glory to God, is to mock God, instead of to serve him. It savours much of pride and hypocrisy, when people do not care to go to church unless they can look fine, and make a figure there."

"By greetings or salutations in the streets or market-places," we are to understand the tokens of respect generally given to men of rank and reputation by the great body of the people. In receiving these there was nothing wrong; but to "love" them, to court them, to put a person's self in the way of receiving them, to be mortified if they are withheld, and to be elevated by their being bestowed,—all this showed a mind which unduly estimated the value of human approbation or applause. Such a temper is not only contemptible, as the token of a weak, ill-judging mind, but it is, in a moral point of view, condemnable. It is a radical defect and fault in a character, and, in a high degree, is

utterly inconsistent with the very elementary principle of a truly good character—supreme regard to what is true and right, whether it pleases men or not. Accordingly, our Lord traces to this, as to one of its causes, his rejection by the Jewish rulers. “How can ye believe,” says he, “which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?”¹

The ruling disposition of the mind may be manifested in trifling actions; and actions, in themselves very insignificant, become important when they indicate character. The general truth intended to be conveyed in these words is of general and everlasting importance. The man who makes the approbation of his fellow-men his great object, and who subordinates everything else to the attainment of this, acts not only a very contemptible, but a very criminal part,—is an object of the Divine disapprobation,—and, if he does not repent, will assuredly be an object of the Divine vengeance.

In the next verse, “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them.”² Our Lord charges those whom he was addressing with at once great moral depravity and great hypocrisy, and represents them, on account of the union of these two qualities, as peculiarly dangerous members of society. We are not to think of the Scribes and the Pharisees as two distinct classes of men. “Scribes and Pharisees” is just equivalent to pharisaic Scribes—Scribes who are Pharisees. Pharisee is the name of the sect,—Scribe, of the profession. A scribe,³ a lettered man, was the distinctive appellation of those whose employment it was to interpret and administer Jewish law; and many of this profession belonged to the sect of the Pharisees.

Our Lord represents these pharisaic Scribes as “like

¹ John v. 44.

² Luke xi. 44.

³ γραμματίς.

graves," receptacles of corruption and loathsomeness. The words are equivalent to—"You are as morally abominable and polluting in a moral sense, as the putrifying remains of a dead carcase are in a physical sense."

But he represents them, farther, as "like graves that are not seen." Walking over, or touching a grave, was considered by the Jewish doctors as equivalent to touching a dead body; and, therefore, as inferring ceremonial pollution. To prevent persons from incautiously incurring this, which exposed them to many inconveniences, the stones which marked graves were generally whitened. When this was not the case, a person might incur ceremonial pollution, and the inconveniences connected with it, without being aware.¹ Now, says our Lord, 'you resemble such unwhited, and therefore unseen, graves. With all your inward depravity, you make the profession, and wear the appearance, of sanctity; you are not openly profligate, you conceal your true character, so that men are in peculiar danger from you. The poor widows, whose houses you spoil, are deluded by your pretensions to wisdom and worth. Many, deceived by your assumed sanctity, resign themselves to your guidance, and are led by you into error and ruin, who, if they knew your real character, would choose safer guides.'

The same, or at least a very similar truth, is illustrated by another, and in some measure an opposite figure, in the gospel by Matthew:—"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."² The general sentiment is, that those persons are peculiarly criminal and dangerous, who, while they are under the influence of the most depraved principles, yet maintain a decent exterior, and that, however

¹ Numb. xix. 16.

² Matth. xxiii. 27, 28.

they may impose on their fellow-men, they are regarded with disapprobation, and will, if they repent not, be visited with punishment by Him who "requires truth in the inward parts," and who, as he "searches the heart, and tries the reins of the children of men," "all things being naked and open before him,"—cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked.

It also follows, from what is said here, that he who, in doing his duty, is the means of unmasking the hypocrite, and making him appear in his true colours, performs an important service to society. By making the seat of moral pollution apparent, he diminishes the risk of extending moral contamination.

II.—THE LAWYERS CONDEMNED.

On hearing these remarks by our Lord, one of the Pharisee's guests, who is denominated a "lawyer," addressed our Lord. "Then answered one of the lawyers, and said unto him, Master, thus saying thou reproachest us also."¹ These words may be understood either as a question, or as an assertion. To understand them aright, we must first endeavour to discover to what class the speaker belonged. It has been the opinion of some learned men that the "Scribes" were public expounders of the law, and that "lawyers," or "doctors of the law," were private expounders of the law. Others have supposed that the Scribes were teachers of the law belonging to the sect of the Pharisees, and lawyers, or doctors of the law, teachers of the law belonging to the sect of the Sadducees. But such a distinction is unsupported by any satisfactory evidence; nor is it at all probable, from the inveterate dislike existing between the sects, that a Sadducee should be found at a Pharisee's table. The terms "scribe" and "lawyer" seem to have been synonymous, or, at any rate, to have been given to the same class. The person

¹ Luke xi. 45.

who, in Matth. xxii. 34, is termed a "lawyer," is, in Mark xii. 8, termed a "scribe;" the persons who are called, at Luke v. 17, "doctors of the law and Pharisees," are, at the 21st verse, called "Scribes and Pharisees."¹

The facts seem to have been these:—One of the company, who had in silence heard our Lord censure the manners of the Pharisees generally, lost his temper when he brought home his accusation to the doctors of the law, to which class he belonged, and exclaimed, 'In making that statement, you cast a reproachful stigma on the order to which I belong;' or, as a question, 'Do you mean, by this statement, to cast a reflection on our order?' The appellation, "Master," or Teacher, was used, probably, sarcastically. The man seems astonished that he should be so daring as to throw out a reflection against an order so venerable as the clergy—if I may use the phrase—of the dominant sect.

Jesus had spoken only the truth, and he was not the person to eat his own words. He immediately replied, "Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers;"² as if he had said, 'My remarks do apply to your order with peculiar force.' To "lade men with burdens grievous to be borne," signifies, that in their interpretations of the law, which, as the apostle says, was "a yoke" which neither his contemporaries nor their fathers were able to bear,³ they were very rigorous; and, in addition to what was enjoined in the law, they required that all the traditions of the elders should be strictly complied with. But while they were strict in enjoining, they were lax in performing. They *said*, but *did not*. Perhaps the words refer to their rigour in those impositions which were of mere human authority. However they made

¹ Camero, Trigland, and Hoffman in his Notes to Pritius, may be consulted as to the meaning of the term *scribes*. It is remarkable that Luke alone, of all the evangelists, connects *scribes* with *pharisees*. Ch. vi. 1, 40; xiv. 3.

² Luke xi. 46.

³ Acts xv. 10.

void God's laws, they insisted that their traditions should be attended to. How different from the conduct of our Lord! The burden he laid on his followers was light, and his apostles followed his example.¹

How these men excused themselves from many of the onerous observances they exacted from others, our imperfect acquaintance with the history of the times puts it out of our power to give a definite explication by well-authenticated examples. Perhaps the best illustration we can give of it is to be found in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Romans:—"Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."²

An inconsistent public teacher of religion, whose practice does not correspond with his teaching, is one of the most contemptible and criminal of men. "What greater hypocrisy can there be than to press that upon others, to be believed and done, which they themselves live in unbelief of, or disobedience to? who pull down in their practice, what they build up in their preaching; who, when they are in the pulpit, preach so well that it is a pity they should ever come out; but when they are out of the pulpit, live so ill that it

¹ Acts xv. 28; 1 Cor. vii. 28.

² Rom. ii. 17-24.

is a pity that they should ever come in ; like bells that call others to church, but hang out of it themselves ; or like direction posts that point the way to others, but stand still themselves ? ” ¹ To him the words of our Lord apply with awful emphasis. “ Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant.” What will such a one say when God punishes him ? Ah, he must be speechless !

What follows is rather of difficult interpretation :—“ Woe unto you ! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers : for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres.” ² The difficulty does not originate in the obscurity of particular words or phrases, for in this respect all is easy enough, but in the apparent want of consecutiveness and coherence, in the thoughts and argument.

On a cursory reading of the words, it would seem that our Lord pronounces a woe on the Pharisees, because they erected splendid monuments to those prophets who had in former ages died martyrs to the truth, and victims of the irreligion of their cotemporaries, and that he addresses the fact of their thus building magnificent tombs for these prophets, as evidence of their approbation of the conduct of those who put them to death.

Now, though building monuments to the prophets was by no means so meritorious a work as the Pharisees seem to have considered it, yet, in itself, it does not appear to deserve so severe reprobation, and instead of proving that they thought their ancestors right in putting the prophets to death, it seems a very decided proof that they thought them wrong. It looked like an endeavour on their part to compensate the wrong done to the persons of these martyred saints, by doing justice to their memories. Their fathers put them to a disgraceful death, and they place them in an

¹ Henry.

² Luke xi. 47, 48.

honourable tomb. We should not think of accusing Joseph of Arimathea, of allowing the deeds of the Jews in crucifying Jesus, and adducing as evidence of this, that he gave him an honourable burial in his own new sepulchre.

Various plans have been fallen on by interpreters, to get rid of these difficulties. One of the most ingenious of these¹ is grounded on the supposition, that 'to build sepulchres,' is equivalent to the expression, 'to dig graves,' in the sense of plotting the death of the persons referred to. 'Woe to you, for you are preparing graves for the prophets, the divinely inspired and commissioned teachers, such as John and myself, and my apostles who are sent to you, just as your fathers killed the prophets, the divinely inspired and commissioned teachers who were sent to them. You give very satisfactory evidence, that you are of the same opinion with your fathers, and approve of their conduct. They killed the prophets of their age, and you dig the graves, you prepare the tombs, of the prophets of your age—you are, both literally and figuratively, the children of the murderers of the prophets—you are prosecuting the same course—you are filling up the measure of their iniquity—you are completing the work they began.'

This is no doubt ingenious, but, like many such interpretations, it is too ingenious. Had this been the only place where our Lord expressed the sentiment uttered here, we might have been less indisposed to admit this interpretation; but in the discourse recorded by Matthew, in the twenty-third chapter of his gospel, we find our Lord using the following language, and we can have no doubt that his object was to express the same idea as the words before us are intended to convey:—"Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would

¹ Storr.

not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets. Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.”¹ Now it is quite plain that in the phrases, “building the tombs,” and “garnishing the sepulchres,” the reference is to the ancient prophets, whom their fathers wickedly put to death, and that the erecting and embellishing these structures were intended as tokens of respect for them, and of disapprobation of their murderers.

I apprehend the difficulty has originated principally in overlooking the great object of our Lord in the whole paragraph, which is to expose and denounce the hypocrisy of the pharisaic Scribes. It is on account of their impious hypocrisy, that he pronounces a wo on them; and the particulars referred to are not so much the crimes that exposed them to this wo, as the evidence proving that hypocrisy, which made them the objects of the peculiar abhorrence of that God who “desireth truth in the inward parts,” and if repentance intervened not, would certainly draw down on them the most fearful proofs of his displeasure. Of their hypocrisy he had already given striking proofs. ‘You are very careful about the physical purity of your vessels, while you care not for the poisonous taint of God’s curse which defiles their contents from the unlawful means by which they have been filled. You tithe mint and rue, and all manner of herbs, but pass over judgment and the love of God. You are very strict in enjoining duties on other men, and very lax in performing them yourselves.’ He now adduces an additional evidence of their hypocrisy—‘You profess great respect for the memory of the martyred prophets, and great disapprobation of your ancestors who put them to death, and yet you cherish the same malignant dispositions, and are about to imitate the very conduct which you so

¹ Matth. xxiii. 29-32.

loudly condemn. How does your conduct contradict your professions? Here is another proof of your hypocrisy. Ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them; that is, as if he had said,—‘You build the sepulchres of the prophets whom your fathers killed—you profess a great reverence for their characters and doctrines, and high disapprobation of their persecutors and murderers. That is the natural meaning of building and adorning their tombs, and that is the meaning you wish to put on these actions. For ye say,—“If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.” Yet, notwithstanding this, ye truly bear witness that ye approve of the deeds of your fathers.’

This witness does not refer to their building and adorning the tombs of the prophets, but to the manner in which they had treated John, and were treating himself, and were to treat both him and his inspired messengers. ‘You persecute, and ere long will imbrue your hands in the blood of men possessed of the same characters, invested with the same authority, and teaching the same doctrines, as those on whom you heap posthumous honours, and of whose murder and murderers ye profess so strong an abhorrence.’

The only difficulty connected with this mode of interpretation, is the connective particle “for,”¹ which joins the two clauses in the forty-eighth verse together. The building the sepulchres of the prophets whom their fathers had killed, appears to be adduced as the evidence that they allowed the deeds of their fathers, when in reality it seems in its own nature, as well as in their intention, evidence of the very reverse. The true way of getting rid of this difficulty is by adverting to the fact—that the particle rendered *for* not unfrequently, like the Hebrew particle which it represents,² is equal to *although*. I shall give a few examples

¹ *for*.

² *אף*.

of this : "And this is the condemnation, *that*," although, "light is come into the world, and," yet "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil."¹ "And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; *for*," although, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth: neither will I again smite any more everything living, as I have done."² "And it came to pass, when Pharaoh had let the people go, that God led them not through the way of the land of the Philistines, although that was near; for God said, Lest peradventure the people repent when they see war, and they return to Egypt."³ "Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the Lord our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst."⁴ "And when thou art spoiled, what wilt thou do? Though thou clothest thyself with crimson, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of gold, though thou rentest thy face with painting, in vain shalt thou make thyself fair; thy lovers will despise thee, they will seek thy life."⁵ The meaning, then, seems to be this, 'Although you build the tombs of the prophets whom your fathers put to death, yet do you, by your conduct, witness that you allow, that you approve of, their conduct;' as if he had said, 'Your conduct to me, in devising my death as you are doing just now, can be vindicated only on principles which would vindicate the conduct of the opposers, and persecutors, and murderers, of the ancient prophets.'

In following up this charge, our Lord proceeds to say :—

¹ John iii. 19.

² Gen. viii. 21.

³ Exod. xiii. 17.

⁴ Deut. xxix. 18, 19.

⁵ Jer. iv. 30.

"Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles,¹ and some of them they shall slay and persecute: That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; from the blood of Abel, unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation."² To the satisfactory exposition of this passage, the first question that must be answered is, 'Are these our Lord's words, or are they a quotation?' There can be no doubt that the words do not resemble our Lord's ordinary style, and that they do very much resemble the style of the Old Testament prophets. The only word that does not suit them is "apostles," but we know that word is just equivalent to messengers, and might have been so translated. The prefatory clause, too, "Wherefore also said the wisdom of God," looks very like the introduction of a quotation.

Indeed, had it not been the want of some corresponding phrase, such as, "Said the Lord," or, "Said the Lord by the prophet," in the parallel passage in Matthew, and the difficulty of saying whence the quotation is taken, I rather think there would never have been any doubt on the subject. To suppose that our Lord here speaks of himself as "the wisdom of God," and that the words, "Wherefore, the wisdom of God said to you," are equal to, 'Wherefore, I say to you,' seems to me a very harsh and unsatisfactory way of getting over the difficulty. I think it far more likely, that the usual formula of citation, "saith the Lord," has been omitted in the corresponding passage in Matthew. Such omissions occasionally occur in Scripture; Mal. iii. 1, where the phrase, "saith the Lord," is obviously to be sup-

¹ "It appears remarkable that, according to Matthew, the Redeemer designates some of those to be sent *αγγελους* = the Hebrew *מַלְאָכִים*. The expression is used in contrast with the pharisaic Scribes, *q. d.*, 'I will send you men *truly* acquainted with the word of God.'—OLSHAUSEN.

² Luke xi. 49-51.

plied, as it is expressed in chap. i. 2, 13; Matth. xvii. 11; and xviii. 16. I am, therefore, disposed to consider the words before us as a quotation.

But the question naturally occurs, 'A quotation from whom, or from what?'¹ Some have supposed that "the wisdom of God" is the name of a book, now lost, from which the quotation is made. I think it more likely, that "the wisdom of God" is used here for the wise God. We say of a wonderful event, That was the work of the power of God—nothing but the power of God could have done that; when the meaning obviously is, The powerful God has effected it. We say of a valuable blessing, It is the gift of the goodness of God, when we mean, The benignant God has given it; and here, "the wisdom of God said," is just 'the all-wise God has said'—he who knows the end from the beginning.

Calvin, who was a judicious interpreter, as well as a profound theologian, considers the phrase as equivalent to, "Long ago God, by the prophetic spirit, declared the truth with regard to your character and doom." He adds, "I acknowledge that you will not find this sentence, in so many words, in any of the ancient prophets; but everywhere, in the Old Testament Scriptures, God declares the contumacy of his rebellious people, and our Lord collects, in one short sentence, as it were, an epitome of what God, by his prophets, had said of the wickedness of that incurable people."

There is a passage in one of the Apocryphal books, somewhat like that now before us:—"I sent unto you my servants, the prophets, whom ye have taken and slain, and

¹ These words are not to be found, either in the Old Testament, or in any Apocryphal book. There are, however, some very kindred passages: for example, 2 Chron. xxiv. 19. The similarity between our Lord's words, and the version of the LXX., is striking. Olshausen remarks that, "As the account of Zacharias immediately follows 2 Chron. xxiv. 20, it is still a question whether our Lord had not the citation of the Old Testament in view, and merely expanded it a little." The strongest objection to this is, that the passage in Chronicles is history. That quoted here is prophecy.

torn their bodies in pieces, whose blood I will require at your hand.”¹ But there is no reason to think that book so ancient as the days of our Lord. It seems plainly the forgery of a later age; and the passage I have quoted, as well as others—especially the beautiful passage about gathering the Jews together, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings,²—appears to have been borrowed from the New Testament. We must, then, acquiesce in Calvin’s view, or consider it as like Enoch’s prophecy, in the epistle of Jude, either as an unwritten prophetic oracle, or an oracle contained in some book no longer extant, but of undoubted, and, at that time, generally admitted, authority.

Let us now inquire into the meaning of this prediction, and its bearing on our Lord’s object. The connective particle, “therefore,”³ does not seem to intimate that this is an inference from what had been stated before, for it does not seem to be this. It is equivalent to, ‘With reference to this thing.’ This is not an uncommon meaning of the term. ‘In reference to this thing, the all-wise God has made a declaration—I will send them prophets and apostles, or messengers, and some of them they shall slay and persecute.’

The fiftieth verse describes, not the purpose for which God was to send these prophets and messengers, but the consequence of the Jews slaying and persecuting them. It is as if he had said, ‘So that⁴ the blood of all the prophets, that has been shed from the foundation of the world, shall be required of this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zacharias, who perished between the altar and the temple.’⁵

¹ 2 Esdras i. 32.

² 2 Esdras i. 30.

³ διὰ τοῦτο.

⁴ Matth. xiii. 13, 52; xviii. 23; xxi. 43. John xix. 11.

⁵ “The Ecbatic sense of *ἵνα* has been called in question by Fritzsche and others, but has been abundantly established by Tittmann, in his admirable work, ‘De usu Particularum, in N. T.’ Hermann’s note to Vigerus, and Winer’s Grammar, may be consulted.”—ROBINSON, *in verb.*

⁶ Zechariah was stoned at the command of king Joash in ἀλλ’ οἶνον θυμίου. The θυμιατήριον referred to is the great altar of burnt-offering, that stood in the open air, at the entrance of the buildings, properly called the Temple—δ ἱεῖος.

Interpreters are divided as to who this Zacharias is, of whom the ancient oracle spoke. The most probable account of the matter is, that it is the Zechariah of whose death we have an account in 2 Chron. xxiv. 17-22. It is not unlikely that Zechariah's father had two names,—Jehoiada, and Barachiah,—as to have two names does not seem to have been an uncommon thing among the Jews; or he might be the grandson of Jehoiada, by a son called Barachiah.¹ The reason why he is mentioned as the last of the prophets that had been killed probably is, that the oracle quoted was published soon after this event. The general meaning is, that the Jewish nation, by persisting in disobeying God, and in maltreating his inspired messengers, would, at last, draw down upon themselves a punishment so awfully severe, that it might be considered as the concentrated vengeance due for all the murders of martyred prophets and holy men in all ages.

The concluding words of the fifty-first verse seem to be spoken by our Lord in his own person. They are an emphatic confirmation of the awful oracle: "Verily, I say unto you, it shall be required of this generation." The accumulated guilt of ages was, as it were, to become theirs, by the murder of the Messiah and his apostles; and awful was the retribution which awaited them. How accurately the event corresponded with the prediction, who does not know? Never was there a generation so guilty, and never was there a generation so punished. Read the history of the last days of the Jewish republic, as recorded by their own unbelieving historian, Josephus, and then say, if the judgments executed on the Jewish nation were not such as to fill, to the full, human nature's capacities of suffering, and if our Lord's own emphatic words were not literally fulfilled:—"For in those days shall be affliction, such as was not from the beginning of the crea-

¹ *Vide* Wetstein and Kuinoel.

tion, which God created, unto this time, neither shall be?"¹

The best illustration of these words is to be found in the parable of the vineyard and husbandmen, and in the words of the Apostle Paul to the Thessalonians:—"A certain man planted a vineyard, and set an hedge about it, and digged a place for the wine-fat, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country. And at the season he sent to the husbandmen a servant, that he might receive from the husbandmen of the fruit of the vineyard. And they caught him, and beat him, and sent him away empty. And again he sent unto them another servant; and at him they cast stones, and wounded him in the head, and sent him away shamefully handled. And again he sent another; and him they killed, and many others; beating some, and killing some. Having yet therefore one son, his well-beloved, he sent him also last unto them, saying, They will reverence my son. But those husbandmen said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance shall be ours. And they took him, and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard. What shall therefore the Lord of the vineyard do? he will come and destroy the husbandmen, and will give the vineyard unto others."² The Jews "both killed the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they please not God, and are contrary to all men; forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles, that they might be saved, to fill up their sins alway: for the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost."³

Our Lord brings still another charge against the pharisaic Scribes:—"Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye enter not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered."⁴ He charges

¹ Mark xiii. 19.

² 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16.

³ Mark xii. 1-9.

⁴ Luke xi. 52.

them with taking away "the key of knowledge"—that is, knowledge, which is the key. "The key" here is the key of the kingdom; this is plain from the parallel passage in the gospel by Matthew, where they are said to "shut up the kingdom of God against men,"¹ and from what is said to follow from their taking away the key. They locked the gates of the kingdom, so that there was no entrance. The key of the kingdom is knowledge—knowledge of the truth in reference to the design of the Messiah's advent, and the nature of his kingdom. That knowledge was to be got in the Old Testament Scriptures. But the pharisaic Scribes misinterpreted these Scriptures, and taught their countrymen to expect in the Messiah a temporal prince, and worldly honour, power, and pleasure, as the blessings of his reign. By their false views, they excluded themselves from the blessings of the new and better economy; and, so far as these views prevailed, they prevented others from participating in these blessings. They thus became the authors of destruction, both to themselves and to others.

These faithful statements, instead of reclaiming, irritated our Lord's opponents:—"They began to urge him vehemently, and to provoke him to speak of many things; laying wait for him, and seeking to catch something out of his mouth, that they might accuse him."² But their insidious arts were in vain. He opened his mouth in wisdom; and, while he fearlessly spoke the most unpalatable truth, he carefully avoided everything which might give them an advantage over him, by affording them the means either of exciting the multitude to destroy him by violence, or of drawing down on him the vengeance of the Roman government, as a seditious disturber of the public peace.

I conclude, in the words of a respected elder brother:³ "Let us not turn away from this benevolent severity un-

¹ Matth. xxiii. 13.

² Luke xi. 53, 54.

³ Dr Bennet, the friend and biographer of the venerable Bogue.

profited. Let us shun that pharisaic religion, which was, and still is, the ruin of the Jews. Let us view the law of God as the rule for the heart, as well as for the life; and as it is too broad, and strict, and spiritual, to give justification or life for our imperfect obedience, let us learn by it to flee to Christ, who 'is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.' At Christ's bidding, let us beware of lofty pretenders to sanctity, who arrogantly assume authority over the souls of men. Meekness, modesty, mercy, and active benevolence, are the characteristics of genuine religion, in every age, and under every dispensation. Let us counteract the cruelty of those who would shut the kingdom of God against such as are desirous of entering; promote the free circulation and use of the holy Scriptures; and unfold the grace of the Gospel, in opposition to the insufferable law of works; and having well improved the key of knowledge for ourselves, let us act in the spirit of the purest and loftiest zeal for the universal diffusion of the word of God." ¹

NOTE A, p. 426.

The remarks of ALEXANDER KNOX on the subject, appear to me singularly just. Speaking of a Christian of a higher order of spiritual attainment he says, "The man I speak of has separated himself from the pollutions of the world, without withdrawing from its common intercourse. This, however, requires much discriminative wisdom, and unremitting watchfulness, as well as tenderness of conscience: but when the habit is gained it is invaluable. He will not go into worldly company for pleasure, because his taste is of another kind; but he will not

¹ Lectures on Christ's Preaching, p. 231.

shrink from calls of duty or propriety, because he scarcely fears the world more than he loves it. He fears it enough to make him ever watchful against its seductions, and ever solicitous to take to himself 'the whole armour of God.' But with this safeguard, he has no dread of any of its scenes; except when he should be, in any respect, a partaker 'in the unfruitful works of darkness.' When, therefore, such a person does mingle with the people of the world, he knows why he does so. It is no stealthy advance beyond the limit of his conscience, no widening of the circle which he once prescribed to himself. It is, as concurring circumstances have fully shown him, an actual part of his duty. 'In the calling,' merely, 'wherein he was called, therein he abides with God.' Acting in this simplicity, he finds frequent opportunities for useful conversation, of which he avails himself with the wisest management he can use. Being accustomed to view religion itself as in the most harmonious agreement with nature, providence, and all the higher tastes of man, he can graft wise and pious observations on subjects that would leave no opening whatever to the theological dogmatist; and, not having caught religion by the means of any party, he speaks of it solely in the language of plain sense, without danger of exciting either risibility or disgust, by any uncouthness of phraseology. But if he should find it expedient even to be wholly silent on religious subjects (in which case he will make his stay as short as decorum or duty will allow), he will still have comfort in reflecting that he has shown by his behaviour, that what the world deems over-strictness, does not necessarily contract the brow, or damp the spirits, or cramp the intellect, or blunt the mental taste, or make a man less capable of holding his place among mankind (as far as he himself judges it proper), with ease, with respectability, with courtesy, and yet with an independence of mind which no mere man of the world, ever did or could exemplify."—Remains, Vol. I., pp. 152, 153.

EXPOSITION VI.

FIGURATIVE VIEWS OF THE PURPOSE OF OUR LORD'S MISSION; OF THE MEANS OF GAINING IT; AND OF HIS FEELINGS IN REFERENCE TO BOTH.

LUKE xii. 49, 50.—“ I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!”

A CAREFUL reader of the New Testament cannot fail to observe that many of our Lord's statements respecting future events, especially in reference to the design of his mission, and the means by which that design was to be accomplished, could, at the time they were made, from the figurative, and often enigmatical, language adopted by him, be but very imperfectly, if at all, understood, by those to whom they were addressed; while, at the same time, this very figurative and enigmatic style which occasioned the obscurity, was fitted to excite attention and secure recollection, so that, when the events predicted actually occurred, not only was the meaning of the predictions clearly unfolded, but the supernatural knowledge and the divine mission of him who uttered them were satisfactorily established. I refer to such declarations as the following;—“ Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” “ As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up.” “ When the Son of man is lifted up, then shall ye know that I am he.” “ And I, if I be lifted up from the



earth, will draw all men unto me." "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." "A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again a little while, and ye shall see me."¹

These things our Lord spoke "in proverbs." He knew that those whom he addressed were not at the time able to bear the truths couched under these figurative expressions, had they been stated in plain terms. He did not mean such sayings to be fully understood at the period they were spoken; but he did mean, that though not understood, they should be remembered. He meant that his sayings should sink into the ears and into the hearts of his disciples, that when the light of fulfilment made the meaning of the prediction palpably obvious, they might recollect what he said to them, and, instead of being stumbled at events very different from, in many cases directly opposite to, what their national prejudices, and misapprehension of Old Testament prophecy, had led them to anticipate, might find in these events a corroboration of his claims, and a confirmation of their own faith. "In this they partook of what may be considered as a general character of our Lord's teaching,—the impressing indelibly, by parable, proverb, maxim, or seeming paradox, truths but very imperfectly understood, but which would grow clearer as the divine life was formed within, and become an ever increasing source of spiritual light."²

To this remarkable class of passages referred to, our text obviously belongs. "I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled? But I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!" These words must have excited eager attention, they must have been heard with deep interest, by those to whom they were originally spoken; but they could

¹ John ii. 19; iii. 14; xii. 32, 24; xvi. 19.

² Neander.

convey to their minds no very distinct meaning. The disciples must have felt equally that they could not understand them, and that they could not forget them. It was not long till the mystery was unfolded, the enigma solved. The event explained the prediction; and it then became evident at once why the prediction had been given, and why it had been given in so peculiar a form.

Let us endeavour, in the light of accomplishment, to ascertain the meaning of this very remarkable oracle. It naturally divides itself into two parts: the first referring to the design of our Lord's mission, and his feelings in reference to that design,—“I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I if it be already kindled?” the second, to the means by which this end was to be accomplished, and his feelings with regard to these means,—“But I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!” I shall turn your attention shortly to these two parts of the divine oracle in their order.

I.—OF THE DESIGN OF OUR LORD'S MISSION, AND HIS FEELINGS IN REFERENCE TO IT.

Let us first, then, consider the view here given us of the design of our Lord's mission, and of his feelings with regard to this design. “I am come to send fire on the earth;”¹ and what will I if it be already kindled?”

And first here, of the design of our Lord's mission,—“I am come to send fire on the earth.” The design of our Lord's mission is often stated in plain terms by himself and his disciples. The substance of all these statements is, that he came to destroy ignorance and error, sin and misery—those works of the devil, and make men wise, and good, and happy, by restoring them to the knowledge, and favour, and fellowship of God.

¹ “Ignis ille non est natus terra. *ut* non *eo* *ut*, verse 51.”—BENGEL.

The description of the design of our Lord's mission contained in the text is highly figurative. The first step towards obtaining possession of any truth intended to be conveyed by a figure, is a distinct apprehension of the figure itself. Let us inquire, then, what is the literal meaning of the words rendered "I am come to send fire on the earth." It may mean—"I am come to cast fire on the earth, to strike the earth with lightning, to call down fire from heaven to consume its guilty inhabitants;" or, 'I am come to kindle a fire on earth.' Neither of these senses seems to be satisfactory. The first would naturally enough describe what shall be one design of our Lord's second coming, when he shall come "in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not his gospel."¹ But whatever misery, through man's unbelief and impenitence, may be occasioned by our Lord's first coming, its design is wholly benignant:—"God sent not his Son into the world to condemn" or punish "the world; but that the world through him might be saved;" "I came not," says our Lord, "to judge," *i. e.*, to condemn and punish, "the world, but to save the world."² The second sense, that of kindling a fire on the earth—*i. e.*, somewhere on its surface, whatever mystical meaning might be given to the words—seems at once too indefinite and too limited, to answer the exigencies of the passage.

I am disposed to think that the true literal meaning of the words is, 'I am come to set the earth on fire; I am come to produce a general conflagration.' If this be admitted to be the literal meaning of the terms, there can be very little difficulty in fixing on their spiritual signification. They indicate that his religion, his doctrine, accompanied by his Spirit, should rapidly, and at length universally, overspread the world, diffuse itself among mankind, and either thoroughly impregnate with its own spirit, or utterly consume,

¹ 2 Thess. i. 8.

² John iii. 17; xii. 47.

all human institutions,—purifying whatever will submit to purification, and destroying what is incapable of purification.

“Fire” is, in Scripture, the emblem both of the word and of the Spirit of God. “Is not my word a fire and a hammer, breaking the rock in pieces?” The cloven tongues of fire, the forked lightning flames, which sat on the heads of the apostles on the day of Pentecost, were appropriate representations of the rapid dissemination of the doctrines they were to propagate, and the powerful destructive energy, with which they were instinct, against all the varied forms of evil.¹ In an Old Testament oracle, giving an account of the Father “bringing in his first-begotten into the world,”—in other words, of Jesus Christ establishing, by divine power, his kingdom among men,—it is said, “Fire goeth before him.” “His lightnings enlightened the world.”² And in the Apocalypse, fire is said to proceed out of the mouth of the mystic witnesses, who speak his truth under the influence of his Spirit, and to consume their and his enemies.³ The words before us, then, seem just equivalent to, ‘My religion shall rapidly and irresistibly diffuse itself among mankind; and wherever it does so, it shall, like a consuming fire, destroy ignorance and error, depravity and misery—those works of the devil—and utterly annihilate everything which counteracts its influence and opposes its progress.’

How remarkably has our Lord's declaration been accomplished! How striking is the fulfilment which even now is taking place! How rapidly did the sacred fire diffuse itself in the primitive ages! how did it purify! how did it consume! Where is “over-dated Judaism,” and its magnificent temple? Where is pagan philosophy, with its groves and porticoes? Where is idolatry, with its innumerable shrines, and altars, and temples? Where is imperial Rome, with her invincible armies, and all but unbounded empire? They have been

¹ Acts ii. 3.

² Psalm xcvi. 3, 4.

³ Rev. xi. 5.

burnt up by this fire of the Lord,—they have been “ consumed by the brightness of his coming.”

For a season—long, as we count duration, but short with Him with whom “ a thousand years are as one day,”—the holy fire seemed arrested in its progress, and even in hazard of being extinguished. But the dark, bleak middle ages passed away, and, at the period of the glorious Reformation, blown on by the breath of God, it burst forth with new vigour, and in an incredibly short period, throughout the best portion of Europe, consumed the errors and superstitions of papal Rome.

In our own age we have seen, with delight, the progress and the power of this heaven-lit conflagration. We see it kindled up in numerous widely-scattered regions of our earth, and everywhere manifesting its energy in destroying what is evil. And its fire must be lighted up in,—ay, it must be diffused over—every land, trying, purifying, destroying,—and it must glow with intenser ardour, till every human institution, civil, literary, or ecclesiastical, which embodies false principle and cherishes depraved feeling,—which, in its character and tendency, opposes the truth, the purity, and the benignity of the gospel of Christ, become fuel to its flames. This conflagration must become universal. This deluge of holy lustratory fire must cover the whole earth, and all human systems of government, philosophy, and religion, must, by it, be either purified or consumed.

The same great and glorious event is predicted by the prophets Daniel and John, under different sets of emblems. The stone cut out of the mountains without hands strikes the stately image on the feet; and the iron and the clay, the brass, the silver, and the gold, are broken in pieces, and become like the chaff of the summer thrashing-floor, and the wind carries them away, and no place is found for them; while the stone which smote the image becomes a great mountain, and fills the whole earth. The kingdom set up

by God in the days of the fourth great gentile kingdom shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and shall stand for ever.¹ "I saw," says John, "heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True; and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew but he himself: And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations; and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." And what shall be the result of this celestial war against the powers of evil? "Voices in heaven" shall ere long proclaim it: "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."²

So much for the illustration of the view here given us of the design of our Lord's mission,—to kindle a conflagration which shall pervade the earth, assimilating all things to itself—purifying or destroying them.

The feelings of our Lord in reference to this design, are expressed in the words, "what will I if it be already kindled?"³

Some consider these words as expressive of a feeling of exultation. They consider our Lord as exulting in the hold which his word had already got of some human hearts; he saw in the faith of the little flock, that the heavenly flame in his bosom had caught on kindred material, and though it was but a little spark, he knew that it was in-

¹ Dan. ii. 34, 35, 44, 45.

² Rev. xix. 11-16; xi. 15.

³ "*Volo pro vellem.*"—BENGEL.

extinguishable, and that that smoking flax would yet kindle a blaze which would wrap the whole earth in flames. He sees the unquenchable element, as it were, bursting forth, and exclaims, 'What will I more? the object of my ministry on earth is so far accomplished.'¹ Just as when the Greeks were introduced to him, seeing in them the first fruits of the fulness of the gentile nations, he exclaimed, "The hour is come, that the Son of Man should be glorified."²

Others, with whom we are disposed to agree, consider the words as expressive of desire, rather than of exultation. "What will I?"—or 'what do I wish? but that it were already kindled'—or 'what do I wish? O, that it were already kindled.' The word rendered "if," is sometimes used to express desire; thus Balaam says, "I would there were a sword in mine hand,"³—literally, if there were a sword in my hand. In Isaiah, the word very properly rendered by our translators, "O, that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments,"⁴ is literally, 'If thou hadst hearkened.' And our Lord's words, "If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!"⁵ are obviously equivalent to, 'O, that thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace.' The meaning then seems to be, 'I am come to set the earth on fire—O, that the conflagration were begun.' When we consider how clearly this was connected with the glory of God, and with the happiness of man, we cannot wonder that it should be an object of intense desire to him of whom it is said, "The zeal of thy house hath even consumed me;" and who so loved men, as not to love his own life to the death, in order to obtain their salvation.

The intensity of his desire for the accomplishment of the great design of his mission, is strikingly expressed in the manner in which he speaks in reference to the means by

¹ Neander.

² John xii. 20-23.

³ Numb. xxii. 9.

⁴ Isaiah xlvi. 18.

⁵ Luke xix. 42.

which it was to be accomplished ; means which involved an amount of exertion and suffering to him, which no created mind can estimate. "But," in order to that fire being kindled, "I have a baptism to be baptised with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ?"¹ 'I so intensely desire it, that I am willing to undergo all that suffering, which I know must be endured, in order to the kindling this salutary purifying fire. I am indeed restless till I have sustained it.'

II.—OF THE MEANS OF GAINING THE DESIGN OF OUR LORD'S MISSION, AND HIS FEELINGS IN REFERENCE TO THESE.

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entering on my kingdom?' There are two things we must do here. We must show what truths with regard to our Lord's sufferings, are indicated by their being termed his baptism, and we must show how this baptism of sufferings was necessary in order to his kindling that conflagration; which was the object of his intense desire.

In calling his sufferings a "baptism," our Lord may refer either to the ORIGIN, to the NATURE, or to the DEGREE of his sufferings.

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In using the word baptism as descriptive of his sufferings, our Lord may refer to their NATURE. Baptism marked the person and thing baptised as sacred, devoted to God. Our Lord's sufferings marked him out as the "elect, righteous servant of God," employed by him in the great work of man's redemption. When we contemplate him as the absolutely innocent, all-righteous one, treated as if he had been a sinner, the chief of sinners, we, as it were, hear Jehovah proclaiming,—“Behold my servant whom I uphold, my beloved in whom my soul delights.” “Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world.”²

Finally, in using the word baptism in reference to his sufferings, our Lord may intend to indicate their SEVERITY.

¹ 1 Peter i. 20. Acts iv. 26-28.

² Isaiah xlii. 1. John i. 29.

Some, though not all, the legal baptisms, were immersions, submersions. When we consider the nature, the number, the variety, the severity, the early commencement, the close succession, the strange complication, the long continuance, of his sufferings, we may well say, he was plunged into an abyss of sufferings. He "came into deep waters, where the floods overflowed him."¹ You see, then, what are the qualities of our Lord's sufferings, indicated by their being termed a "baptism;"—they were divinely appointed;—the sufferings of a sacred person,—severe sufferings.

But how were these sufferings necessary as *means* to our Lord's effecting the design of his mission, which was the object of such intense desire to him? This is a wide field, but I must content myself with a few hints. Without any suffering on the part of the Son of God, he might have "kindled a fire in his anger, which would have burned unto the lowest hell, which would have consumed the earth with her increase, and set on fire the foundations of the mountains."² This would have been but the execution of righteous judgment against man the sinner. But to kindle a fire, which should purify and save man, and destroy only what is hostile to his best interests, this required something more than a mere act of power. It had to be made a righteous thing in God to forgive sin and save the sinner. It was only through expiatory suffering, in the room of man, that our Lord could ascend the throne of the universe, as the divinely appointed deliverer from sin and its consequences. He must redeem by price before he can redeem by power. Purchase must precede conquest. The foundations of the mediatorial throne can be laid only in the blood of Him who is to sit on it. He must be lifted up on the cross, in order to his being lifted up on the throne, so as that the world may be judged by him, the prince of this world cast out by him, and all men drawn to him. It was because he humbled himself, becom-

¹ Psal. lxi. 2.² Deut. xxxii. 22.

ing obedient unto death,—the death of the cross, in the room of men, that the Father “highly exalted him,” giving him “power over all flesh,”—“all power in heaven and on earth.”

It only remains now, that we say a few words respecting our Lord’s feelings, as expressed in the text, in reference to his sufferings as the means of gaining the great design of his mission. These are described in the very emphatic exclamation, “How am I straitened till it” (that is, my baptism of suffering) “be accomplished !”

The word rendered “straitened,” when applied to mental affection, is descriptive of that internal struggle, that mingled emotion of aversion and desire, fear and hope, which is produced by the contemplation of some situation of extreme difficulty and suffering, in which we foresee we must be placed, and in which, from the important advantageous consequences likely to arise from our occupying it, and not otherwise attainable, we cannot help wishing ourselves to be placed. It expresses the feelings with which we look forward to an event, in itself extremely disagreeable, absolutely inevitable, and which, when taken in connection with its consequences, we do not wish to avoid. This is a state of mind more easily conceived than described. We may be assisted in forming a conception of the Saviour’s state of mind, at the moment he used the words under consideration, by endeavouring to realise the feelings of an advanced Christian in the immediate prospect of dissolution,—dissolution likely to be the result of agonising suffering. He looks forward to death, and the sufferings which are to produce it, as in themselves most undesirable. He instinctively shrinks from pain, and death,—dissolution. He cannot choose “strangling and death” for their own sakes. Had he it in his option, he would prefer getting to heaven by a painless translation ; he would rather be “clothed upon,” than ‘unclothed ;’ instead of life being swallowed up of mortality, he would wish that “mortality were swallowed up of life.”

But he knows that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God."¹ He knows there is no entrance for him into life, but through death; and that that presence with the Lord which he so ardently longs for, can be obtained only by that divorce from the body, which he cannot but regard with aversion and fear. To be where Christ is, to be with him there, to behold and share his glories, are, in the estimation of such a one, the highest of blessings, blessings well worth dying to obtain; and the assured hope of obtaining these, as the result of dying, makes him more than willing to die, desirous "to depart, to be with Christ, which is far better." Still this desire has a very peculiar character, easily distinguishable from the desire of unmixed good. He is, as the apostle says, using the same word as that before us, "in a strait betwixt two," even when desiring to depart.²

Let us remember, that our Lord's bloody passion, in all its strange complication of bodily agony and mental anguish, was viewed by him as at once inevitable and at hand, and that, at the same time, the glorious results of that passion—results which could be secured in no other way—were fully before his mind, that he had a clear distinct idea, both of the sufferings he was to undergo, and of the glory that was to follow them to him and his; and then we shall have some apprehension, necessarily a very imperfect one, of that painful struggle of antagonist emotion, which stirred to its depths the Saviour's heart, and probably gave a very peculiar expression to his countenance, and tone to his voice, when he said, "I have a baptism to be baptised with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!"

The Captain of our salvation surveyed the opposing host of the enemies of God and man,—their number, their power, their craft, their malignity, were fully apprehended by him. The decisive struggle was at hand. He knew that it would be arduous and mortal. But he equally knew, that final suc-

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 50.

² Phil. i. 23.

cess was not doubtful, and that the agony of the conflict would be richly recompensed in "glory to God in the highest," "salvation with eternal glory" to millions of redeemed men. In painful, eager expectation, he waited the signal from Him who appointed him to enter the field of toil, and blood, and victory.

The words intimate a full conviction that he must suffer. Not that his sufferings, absolutely considered, were necessary, —he suffered because he chose to suffer—but, hypothetically, they were altogether necessary to gain the end he had in view, the finishing transgression, making an end of sin, bringing in an everlasting righteousness, bearing, and bearing away, the sin of the world. They intimate, too, a clear apprehension of the magnitude of his approaching sufferings. In many cases, it would be an alleviation of our suffering, could we but distinctly define the dimensions of approaching evil. Those ill-defined, gigantic shadows, which they cast before them, often excite an alarm altogether disproportioned to their real magnitude. It was, however, otherwise with the Saviour. The sufferings awaiting him, far exceeded anything which the human imagination, even when excited by fear, could have pictured. Finally, these words intimate an invincible resolution, an unquenchable desire, to finish "his strange work in righteousness." "He did not fail, nor was he discouraged." The path lay straight before him, and he pressed onward with a steadiness of movement, which calls up to the mind the making of the tide towards the shore, or the course of the sun through the heavens.

It was but a little while, and the baptism was accomplished: Gethsemane—Calvary—are at hand. The mysterious cry, "It is finished!" is heard; and, when the baptism is accomplished, the conflagration commences. Raised from the dead, he proclaims to his chosen messengers, "All power is given to me in heaven and earth—go disciple all nations—go preach the Gospel to every creature"—apply the lighted torch to the prepared fuel. Soldiers of the cross!

take possession of the world—it is the purchased property of your Lord. The battle then began, which has ever since lasted, and which shall not cease, till the shout of victory peal through the universe: “Halleluiah! the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdom of our Lord and his Christ; halleluiah! the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

What a glorious consummation! The fire of christian truth, and holy spiritual influence, has burnt up the thistles and thorns, the nightshade and upas trees of ignorance, and error, and depravity: “The heavens drop down righteousness, the earth opens, and brings forth salvation;”¹ and a renovated creation smiles under the benignant eye of Him who, sitting on the throne, proclaims, “Behold, I have made all things new.”

Let us, my brethren, remember that, though it is the work of our Lord and King to send fire on the earth, it is a work which he accomplishes through the instrumentality of his people. His people act very much out of character, when, in the ordinary sense of the term, they are fire-brands in society, whether ecclesiastical or civil. But it is their duty—their great primary duty—to keep the fire of holy truth and love which he has kindled in their hearts, burning brightly, and consuming in them every false principle, every unholy desire; and it is equally their duty to endeavour to propagate the sacred fire—to bring all individuals, all societies, all institutions, under its purifying or consuming power. What was the object of such intense desire to our Lord, should draw forth our most earnest wishes. The mind is not in us which was in him—his spirit is not in us, and, therefore, we are none of his—if we do not take a deep interest in the progress and triumph of truth and holiness. Wherever divine truth lays hold on the heart, like fire, it manifests a tendency to communicate itself. Fire naturally spreads: Christians cannot but speak the things they have heard. They “believe, and therefore speak.” When they seek to repress this natural impulse, Jeremiah’s experience

¹ Isa. xlv. 8.

is in some degree likely to be theirs. If they say, from false shame, fear, or any other cause, "I will not make mention of him, nor speak of his name, his word is in their heart as a burning fire shut up in their bones; they are weary with forbearing, and cannot stay." Oh that there were more of this felt necessity among Christians, to communicate what they have received, to spread abroad the fire that burns within! If there is no such disposition, can it be doubted there is no fire within to spread abroad?

And as our Lord proved the intensity of his desire by cheerfully doing and suffering all that was necessary to the accomplishment of the glorious object, so must we. We never could have done what he did; we never could have suffered what he suffered; and without his doings and sufferings, our doings and sufferings in such a cause would have been impossible; and, if possible, would have been unavailing. But we too must labour, we too must suffer, in order to the gaining of the great object of his mission—the purifying of the earth through the fire of his word, animated by his Spirit; and let us never think we can labour nor suffer too much in such a cause.

Let us learn from him never to fail or be discouraged, never to be weary in doing or suffering, in promoting the great object for which he so laboured and so suffered. Let us, like him, seek to finish the work which the Father gives us to do, and think nothing done, while aught remains to do. Let it be a constant subject of desire, and prayer, and labour, that the sacred fire may be universally diffused, and that the whole earth, purified by it, may be presented as a sacrifice to Jehovah.

His labours were not in vain in the Lord, and neither shall ours be. He has seen of "the travail of his soul," and is "satisfied;" and "in due season we shall reap, if we faint not." "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."¹

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 58.

Let all who live under the gospel dispensation remember, that the fire of christian truth, cast among a people as it has been cast among us, must produce effects—important effects—effects, the full importance of which eternity only can develop. If it do not melt the stone, it will rend it; if it do not purify, it will destroy. It is no neutral element. It is “the savour of death unto death,” if it be not “the savour of life unto life.” It is “a quick and powerful word;” and, as received or rejected, it will manifest its power in complete salvation, or in aggravated destruction. A neglected, despised Gospel, will, in the regions of hopeless misery, be a fire that cannot be quenched, burning, without consuming, the very vitals of him who has neglected and despised it. These are weighty words of our Lord: “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him”—that shall judge, condemn, and punish him—“the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.”¹ Ay, it will punish him through eternity; and one of the most earnest, hopeless wishes of a lost soul, throughout unending duration, will be, ‘O that I could forget the Gospel which I heard, but believed not!’ But it cannot be; the recollection is burnt in to the very centre of his being. In addition to the fearful voice sounding unremittingly and endlessly in the ears of all the lost, “You knew your duty, and you did it not,”² a still more heart-rending announcement will be constantly forced on the attention of the Gospel neglecter and despiser—‘Salvation, free, full salvation, was offered you, and you refused it. It *might*, it *would*, have been yours, had you but received what was sincerely proffered. It *can* be yours no more for ever.’ Unbeliever! take warning in time. If you persist in unbelief, it must come to this. You cannot escape this—are you prepared to endure it?

¹ John xli. 48.² Pollok.

EXPOSITION VII.

TRUE HAPPINESS, AND THE WAY OF SECURING IT.

JOHN VI.

THE discourse, on the consideration of which we now enter, was, like most, if not all, our Lord's discourses, occasional, rising out of the circumstances in which he was placed when he uttered it, and from them taking its particular form, and deriving its peculiar illustrations. Its subject is the most important and interesting which can engage the attention of the human mind. It contains a discussion and decision of two questions, which, in all countries and ages, have occupied the thoughts of reflecting men, but to which unassisted reason, though applying all its energies to the task for a long course of centuries, had failed to find a satisfactory reply—What ought to be the object of man's supreme pursuit? and, How is he to secure the attainment of this object?

I.—INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE.

JOHN VI. 1-25.

The circumstances which led our Lord to deliver the discourse now before us, and suggested the instructive and

which it was to be accomplished ; means which involved an amount of exertion and suffering to him, which no created mind can estimate. "But," in order to that fire being kindled, "I have a baptism to be baptised with ; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished ?"¹ 'I so intensely desire it, that I am willing to undergo all that suffering, which I know must be endured, in order to the kindling this salutary purifying fire. I am indeed restless till I have sustained it.'

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entering on my kingdom?' There are two things we must do here. We must show what truths with regard to our Lord's sufferings, are indicated by their being termed his baptism, and we must show how this baptism of sufferings was necessary in order to his kindling that conflagration; which was the object of his intense desire.

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Finally, in using the word baptism in reference to his sufferings, our Lord may intend to indicate their SEVERITY.

¹ 1 Peter i. 20. Acts iv. 26-28.

² Isaiah xlii. 1. John i. 29.

luctantly, to embark without him for the opposite shore, and he remained behind, probably because he knew that had he offered to go, the multitude, in their present temper, would have attempted forcibly to detain him, and certainly because he contemplated making a new trial of his disciples' faith, and giving them a new demonstration of his divine knowledge, and power, and kindness.

The multitude, finding that our Lord had not accompanied his disciples, and concluding, that as there was no other boat on that side of the sea, he could not leave that neighbourhood without their being aware of it, were induced peaceably to disperse, with the intention no doubt of coming together early next morning, and pressing on their chosen leader the acceptance of the honours and allegiance they were ready to yield him. On the multitude departing to find lodging in the villages and country around, our Lord retired into the recesses of the mountains, and spent the greater part of the night in devotional communion with his Father and God.

Meanwhile his disciples encountered a storm in their passage across the lake, and had spent a great part of the night in laboriously struggling, against a strong wind and a stormy sea, to gain the opposite shore. While they were about the middle of the lake, a human form appeared to them, walking on the troubled waves, as on a solid pavement. The surprise, not unmixed with terror, with which men have always regarded intercourse with the inhabitants of the invisible world, was their first emotion; but, on ascertaining that it was indeed their Lord, their fear was turned into joy. Peter, with his characteristic forwardness, requested permission to come to meet his Master on the waters. His request was complied with, and he met with a very impressive demonstration of the weakness of his own faith, and of the omnipotent kindness of his Lord. On Jesus coming aboard the vessel the tempest instantaneously ceased, and in a very short period, if not "immediately," in

the strictest sense of the word, they gained the western shore. On arriving there early in the morning, it is probable that both our Lord and his disciples, who stood much in need of rest, retired for a season to repose.

It is obvious, however, that in this case, the season of relaxation and rest was but brief. The multitude, whose hearts were set on making the miracle-worker their king, collected early in the morning to carry their purpose into effect. But on seeking for Jesus, he was nowhere to be found. This threw them into a state of great perplexity. They knew that the only boat which, the day before, was on that side of the sea, was that in which Jesus and his disciples had crossed from Capernaum. They knew that the disciples had departed without him. They seem to have conjectured that he who could miraculously multiply five loaves and two fishes, so as to constitute an abundant meal for more than five thousand individuals, might also, in some miraculous manner, transport himself across the lake, and, availing themselves of boats which that morning had arrived from Tiberias, they crossed over to Capernaum, in the hope of finding Jesus there, where they knew he had for some time chiefly resided.

Nor was their expectation disappointed. They found him (as appears from the fifty-ninth verse) "about his Father's business," in the synagogue teaching the people. On entering the synagogue, they accosted him, and inquired as to the time of his return, hoping, no doubt, that in telling them *when*, he might also inform them *how*, he had crossed the lake. To this question our Lord gave no reply.¹ The information they wished for might easily be got from the disciples, or from others who had witnessed the miraculous circumstances of his passage.

Our Lord's object plainly was to disabuse them of their

¹ "Non respondit Jesus ad Judæorum *quando*; et sic sæpe in sermonibus ea quæ series rerum et status animorum requirit potius spectat, quam interpellationes loquentium alienas."—BENZEL.

false views and expectations,—to show them that he was not the kind of Messiah they anticipated and wished for,—that it was in vain for them to expect from him the sort of benefits on which they had set their heart, but that he was ready to bestow upon them benefits of a far higher order, benefits which he only could bestow, benefits at once necessary and sufficient to secure their true happiness. He shows them that he was perfectly aware of the real state of their minds, and preaches to them that “repentance,” without which they could not enter into that spiritual kingdom that he had come to establish,—a kingdom altogether different from that earthly kingdom which they were dreaming of establishing by force.

II.—CONVERSATIONAL DISCOURSE TO THE JEWS.

JOHN vi. 26-65.

§ 1. *Misconceptions corrected.*

Probably much to the mortification of these inquirers, our Lord addressed them in these words,—“Verily, verily, I say unto you, Ye seek me, not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves, and were filled.”¹ The object of these men in seeking for Jesus, was, that they might induce him to become their king, and to employ the miraculous powers of which he was possessed in realising their ideas respecting the secular wealth, dignity, and enjoyment which the chosen people were to obtain under Messiah the Prince; and what induced them thus to seek him, was, not so much the miracles they had witnessed, as the particular kind of miracle he had last performed; it was not so much the conviction that he was a divine messenger, of which these miracles were a confirmation, as the conviction that he who could feed five thousand men on five loaves and two fishes, was qualified, if he would but exert his

¹ John vi. 26.

powers, to be their leader in revolting against their Gentile oppressors, and to secure for them victory, conquest, universal dominion.

The words of our Lord, when viewed in their connection, seem to be equivalent to this declaration,—‘ You profess, and indeed you feel, a great eagerness to find me ; but that does not spring from an enlightened conviction that I am a divinely accredited messenger, to prove which is the great design of my miracles. Had it been so, you would have come to learn of me the truth with regard to the kingdom of God ; but instead of that, you seek me as your instrument for erecting a kingdom of this world, which, you perversely think, would be the kingdom of God. Had not the miracles performed been such as to suggest the idea that I might be turned to account in obtaining the gratification of your carnal, selfish wishes and expectations, you would never have sought me. You have no just conception of my true character, or of the nature of the kingdom I am come to establish, and of the blessings which I am come to communicate. It is not because I am a well-accredited divine messenger, but because I am in your estimation a person possessed of powers which, if exerted in your behalf, might secure for you those secular blessings for which alone you have any relish, that you have come here in quest of me. You need to change your minds, to “repent and believe the gospel.” You must change your minds, else you can derive no benefit from me. If you change your minds, you will find that I can, and that I will, bestow on you, blessings infinitely preferable to those, the hope of obtaining which from me, alone induces you now to seek me.’

“ Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life, which the Son of Man shall give unto you : for him hath God the Father ”¹ (rather, the Father, God) “ sealed.”² The first thing neces-

¹ ἰ Παρισ—ἰ Θις.

² John vi. 27.

sary to the right interpretation of this very interesting passage, is to ascertain what are the two things here contrasted as objects of desire and pursuit. "The meat which perisheth," and "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life;"—the food which, perishable in its own nature, ministers only to a mortal life,—and the food which, imperishable in its nature, supports an immortal life.

By some, the contrast has been supposed to be between the food of the body—material nutriment, such as the loaves and fishes,—and the food of the mind, immortal truth: *q. d.*, 'Let not the attainment of the satisfaction of the appetites, the supply of the wants of the body, by material food, but the filling of the capacities of the mind by heavenly knowledge, be the great object of your desire and pursuit.' This brings out a good sense, but it seems unduly to limit our Lord's meaning. It seems to go, too, on the mistaken notion, that the leading object of these Jews was the getting their food furnished them miraculously, which does not seem to have been the case.

We rather think the contrast is between earthly, and therefore short-lived, enjoyments—such as wealth, honour, and pleasure,—figuratively termed "meat that perisheth;" and spiritual and immortal blessings—such as the possession of the Divine favour, conformity to the Divine image, fellowship with God,—figuratively termed "meat which endureth unto everlasting life." Such a figurative use of the word "meat," or "food," is common in all languages. This mode of interpretation, which is equally natural as the former, better suits the connection. It was these earthly blessings the Jews were seeking after. It was these heavenly blessings which our Lord would have them to make the great object of their pursuit.

"Labour not," says our Lord, "for the meat that perisheth." "Labour," or severe exertion, is the natural expression of strong desire to obtain anything. "Labour," here, is just equivalent to—'make the object of desire and

pursuit.' As if he had said, 'Do not make "the meat that perisheth,"—that is, do not make anything that has a reference merely to this frail, mortal, perishable state—anything that is peculiar to this world, "the fashion whereof passeth away,"—do not make secular science, wealth, power, dignity, fame, or pleasure, in any of their forms, the grand object of your desire or pursuit; but, on the other hand, "labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life,"—make the attainment of those blessings which are spiritual in their nature, and immortal in their duration—such as the knowledge of divine truth, the possession of the Divine favour, the love of God, perfect holiness in an entire conformity of mind and will to the mind and will of God,—make the attainment of these blessings the great object of your desire and pursuit.'

With regard to the last class of blessings, our Lord states to them that the Son of Man would give them to them. The "Son of Man" is, as you know, a descriptive denomination for the Messiah. It is borrowed, as I have already mentioned, from Psalm lxxx. 17, "Let thy hand be upon the Man of thy right hand, upon the Son of Man whom thou madest strong for thyself." Our Lord's statement is thus equivalent to a declaration: 'These are the blessings the Messiah has to communicate. It is not "the meat that perisheth," it is not secular benefits,—it is "the meat which endureth unto eternal life," it is heavenly and spiritual blessings—that the Messiah comes to bestow. You have declared that you consider me the Messiah, the Son of Man;' for, no doubt, that was the import of the declaration, "Of a truth this is that Prophet who should come into the world." 'But in coming to me in the hope of obtaining the meat that perisheth—worldly good things—you are indulging an unfounded expectation. These are not the blessings I am come to confer. But there are better blessings, which I am ready to bestow on you. And this is no vain boast. I bring along with me my credentials,

—"Him," the Son of Man, "the Father, God, has sealed."

It is not very easy to say what is the particular figurative allusion here: whether the reference be to the practice of authenticating deeds by affixing a person's seal, or to that of impressing a mark on the body, to distinguish those devoted to the service of a divinity, or whether to the fact of the high-priest having on the front of his mitre, a gold plate engraved as with the engraving of a signet, "Holiness to the Lord." But whatever the particular reference may be, the meaning is plain, "Him hath God accredited, as divinely appointed to bestow these blessings." How the Father sealed the Son of man, we are particularly informed by our Lord, in a passage which has already been explained.¹

It is scarcely necessary to remark, that these words are not to be considered as condemning the making of worldly good things, in any degree, the objects of desire and pursuit. What is condemned, is the making them the supreme objects of desire and pursuit, to the neglect of heavenly and spiritual blessings. These words, though addressed originally to the Jews, and bearing a speciality of meaning as referring to them, are full of important instruction to men in all countries and in all ages. So to labour for the meat that perisheth, as to neglect the attainment of the meat that endureth to eternal life, is the extreme of folly. "For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"² "To labour for the meat that endureth unto everlasting life," is the height of wisdom, not only as it is wise to devote our best desires and energies to the prosecution of the most valuable and worthy objects, but also as this is the surest way of obtaining that measure of "the meat that perisheth," which is really best for us. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."³

¹ John v. 31-39.

² Matth. xvi. 26.

³ Matth. vi. 33.

This statement of our Lord suggested to the leaders of the multitude an important inquiry:—"Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God."¹

If we look attentively at the passage, there can be no doubt, that the object of those who put this question, was to inquire how "this meat that endureth to eternal life," was to be procured. The question is, substantially, 'How are we to obtain this pre-eminently valuable and desirable meat of which you speak?' That is the question we naturally look for in the circumstances of the case, and that is the question which our Lord answers in the following verse. But the phraseology in which the question is expressed is very peculiar, and requires elucidation. "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" The question is elliptical. In its complete form, it obviously is, 'What shall we do, that we might work the works of God, by which this meat, which endureth to eternal life, is to be obtained?'

By "the works of God," it has been usual to understand, works commanded by God, works acceptable to God; but in this case, the question would not have been, "What shall we do, that we might work the works of God?" but, 'What are those works commanded by God, which we must do in order to obtain this meat, which endureth to eternal life?' The difficulty was to discover, not what the kind of works were, but how they should obtain the capacity of doing them. I cannot help thinking, that "works of God," by which the meat which endureth unto eternal life was, in the estimation of the Jews, to be obtained, are here opposed to "works of man," by which the meat that perisheth is to be obtained, and are equivalent to 'superhuman works,'—"works which no man can do, except God be with him,"—in one word, miraculous works. I apprehend we see here the

¹ John vi. 28.

first symptoms of that disposition to cavil, which afterwards becomes so manifest, on these men beginning to perceive that Jesus was, after all, not their man,—not the kind of Messiah they expected and wished for. He had said, “labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life.” “Seek not meat which can but temporarily support a life, which at best will soon terminate, but seek meat which will permanently sustain an immortal life.’ Their question is, ‘But how is such meat to be obtained?’ The ordinary faculties of man, in their ordinary exercise, can enable him to procure “the meat that perisheth,” but it must be by some superhuman operations, such as that by which the five loaves and two fishes became a feast to five thousand, that meat enduring unto everlasting life can be obtained. ‘How are we to do such works? You bid us seek this wonderful food,—will you tell us how we are to do the wonderful works by which alone such food can be obtained?’

To this question, which, as is plain from what follows, did not originate in a sincere desire to obtain instruction, our Lord replied, “This is the work of God,¹ that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.”²

The general meaning here plainly is, ‘It is by believing my doctrine, that you are to obtain those spiritual and eternal blessings, which I have represented under the metaphor of meat enduring unto everlasting life.’ But the manner in which this meaning is conveyed, deserves attention. Our Lord’s statement seems to be, ‘There is indeed no miracle or mystery in the way in which this “meat, which endureth to eternal life,” is to be obtained. If you will but credit the testimony of him whom the Father hath sent and sealed, you shall obtain it. This is the only way of obtaining it. This is the certain way of obtaining it. You speak

¹ The expression, *τὸ ἔργον τοῦ Θεοῦ*, is used with an entirely different reference. Rom. xiv. 10. Even John iii. 21, is not a strict parallel.

² John vi. 29.

as if there must be superhuman works performed by you, in order to gain this end. This is the superhuman work,—this is the miracle: Credit the plain well-attested declaration of him whom the Father hath sent. Do but this, and “the meat which endureth unto eternal life,” is yours.’ It is just the sum of the Gospel, ‘Believe and live.’¹ There is no laborious, no miraculous, work to perform, no need of ascending into heaven, no need of descending into the deep. The revelation of truth and grace,—a plain, a well-accredited revelation is before you. Believe it, and you are saved. This faith is the great commandment of the new economy.² This faith, though it is the most reasonable thing in the world, and though, to a rational being like man, it ought to be the easiest thing in the world, is never exercised by a single partaker of our fallen nature, except under Divine influence, so that it is really “the work of God,” though not in the sense in which the Jews seem to have employed the phrase. It is not at all miraculous. It is not even supernatural, except in the influence under which man acts when he performs it. But in that sense it is supernatural. “No man,” says the Saviour, “can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.” “Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.” “By grace,” says the apostle, “are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God.”³

It is very questionable how far the Jews understood our Lord’s metaphorical discourse about “the meat that perisheth,” and “the meat which endureth to eternal life;” but it

¹ Beza’s illustration is an apt one. “For what sum of money will you cure me, says the patient to the physician. The only thing I demand, says the benevolent physician, is confidence in me. I sincerely wish your recovery; and if you will but confide in me, your cure is certain. What should we say of the patient’s understanding, if he drew the conclusion,—confidence is money, and he who confides in the physician, pays him for his skill and labour? Are they wiser who conclude from this passage, that faith is a work, in the ordinary sense of that word, and that he who is justified by faith, is therefore justified by works?”

² 1 John iii. 23.

³ John vi. 44, 45. Eph. ii. 8.

is plain that they perceived, that in the words which he had just uttered, he laid claim to being sent of God, and to their implicit faith and obedience on this ground. Yesterday, these men had declared themselves fully satisfied respecting the divine mission of Jesus as the Messiah. "This is of a truth," said they, "the Prophet that should come into the world;"¹ and had he concurred in their sentiments and wishes, had he consented to become their king, and exerted his miraculous powers in accomplishing the work which they expected the Messiah to perform, they were not likely to have demanded any farther evidence of his divine mission. But in their case, as in many others, dissatisfaction with the nature of our Lord's doctrines, manifested itself in a complaint, a very unreasonable one, that there was a deficiency of proof for their divine origin.

"They said therefore unto him, What sign shewest thou then, that we may see, and believe thee? what dost thou work?"² The principles on which these questions proceed, are true and important,—that no person has a right to expect that he shall be received as a divine messenger, without producing appropriate and adequate evidence that he is what he professes to be, and that the appropriate and adequate evidence in such a case, is the performance of miracles. But these unquestionably true principles, were misapplied in this case. The evidence had been presented in the most unexceptionable form, and in great abundance. The works which our Lord had done, had borne most distinct evidence, that the Father had sent him. These men, only the day before, had seen him do what no man could have done, except God had been with him. The conclusion they had drawn then, was the just one; and nothing had occurred to shake its foundation. But when they drew it, they

¹ "ὁ προφητὴς ὁ ἐρχόμενος, a designation of the Messiah derived from Deut. xviii. 15."—THOLUCK.

² John vi. 30. "Τί ἐργάζῃ. Reponunt Domino verbum ἐργάζεσθαι. Tu jubeas, inquit, nos operari: quid ipse operaris?"—BENGEL.

supposed that he and they were of one mind, respecting the design of the Messiah's mission, and the nature of his kingdom, and now they more than doubted that their opinions and his were essentially different, and altogether incompatible, and they found it easier to question the validity of his claims, than to yield the implicit submission of mind which, as "the sent of God," he demanded from them.

The miserable shifts to which men in these circumstances have recourse, are very various. Here the Jews seek refuge in the assertion, that our Lord had not proved his divine mission in the same satisfactory manner in which Moses, their great legislator, had accredited his. "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat."¹ That is, as if they had said, 'The miracle by which Moses' divine mission was confirmed, when our fathers were fed for forty years by manna which came down from heaven, was a far more remarkable sign than that given by you, when yesterday you fed the multitude. Work such miracles as Moses did, and then we will admit that God has sent you, and yield you the implicit belief which is due to one sent by him.'

To this cavil, for it deserves no better name, our Lord does not deign to give any direct reply. He knew that those who were not convinced of his divine mission by the miracles he had already performed, were not likely to be convinced by any that could be wrought; and as his object, at this time, was less to vindicate the evidence, than to unfold the substance, of his doctrine, respecting "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life," he goes on to state, that the benefit which was conferred on the Israelites, in giving them manna to eat in the wilderness, was not to be compared with the benefit of which he had spoken, under the name of "the meat which endureth unto everlasting life."

¹ John vi. 31.

§ 2. *The true spiritual provision, and the mode of obtaining it.*

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he” (rather *that*;) “which cometh down from heaven,¹ and giveth life unto the world.”² Some have supposed that our Lord meant to state here, that it was not Moses, but God, who gave the Israelites the manna; and that the manna did not properly come down from heaven, in the highest sense of the term; but though both these statements are true, and both may be brought out of the words, considered by themselves, yet, when the whole passage is looked at, and when our Lord’s object in making the statement is kept in view, there can be no doubt that the sentiment intended to be conveyed, is this, ‘The blessing of which I have been speaking, as “meat enduring to eternal life,” which the Father, by the Son of Man, whom he has sent and sealed, is ready to bestow on all who believe in him, is a far more valuable benefit than that which God by Moses conferred on the Israelites, when he supernaturally supported them on manna during their sojourn in the wilderness. That manna was not the true heavenly bread. The true heavenly bread is that which my Father now giveth you, now freely offers for your acceptance. That bread, in the strictest, highest, sense of the words, “comes down from heaven, and giveth life to the world.”’³

I do not think that our Lord, in these words, meant to state plainly to the Jews that, in employing the phrases, “the true bread from heaven,” and “the bread of God,”

¹ “Lücké justly remarks the difference between *καταβαίνον* here, and *καταβάς*, verse 41. The latter indicates a fact, the former rather a property.”—OLSHAUSEN.

² John vi. 32, 33.

³ “*εἰς αἰῶνα*. Non modo uni populo, uni ætati, ut manna cibavit unum populum, unius ætatis, verse 51.”—BENGEL.

he referred to himself, which our version represents him as doing. He does this in the thirty-fifth verse, after the Jews, by their request in the thirty-fourth verse, had made it evident that they imperfectly, if at all, had penetrated through the veil of figurative representation in which he had clothed his sentiments. Our Lord's meaning is more exactly given by those interpreters who render the passage, "For the bread of God is that which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life to the world."

The Jews seem to have given the name of "the bread of God," and "the bread of heaven," to the manna, in allusion to a passage in the book of Psalms:—"And had rained down manna upon them to eat, and had given them of the corn of heaven. Man did eat angels' food: he sent them meat to the full."¹ Our Lord's assertion, then, is, 'The phrase, "bread of God," is far more applicable to what I am now speaking of than to the manna.'

From this passage, many have drawn the conclusion, that the manna was a type of Christ. This is a conclusion, certainly unwarranted by this passage; and I am not aware that it has a satisfactory scriptural foundation anywhere else. Much ingenuity has been displayed in tracing analogies between the manna and our Lord. Its miraculous production has been supposed to foreshadow his miraculous conception; its pearly figure to point him out as pure and lovely, "the pearl of great price;" its sweet taste, to show, that "to them who believe he is precious;" its falling on the outside of the camp, to foreshow, that they who would be saved by him, must "go to him without the camp;" its falling early in the morning, to typify the first promise; its being given daily, to show that Christ should be his people's daily food; its not being seen on the ground on the Sabbath, to indicate that Christ should be hidden under ground on the Jewish Sabbath. These are but a few out of the

¹ Psalm lxxviii. 24, 25.

many correspondences which fancy has discovered between the manna and our Lord. To indulge in such imaginings, appears to me something worse than ingenious trifling. It is using a most undue freedom with Him who says, "Add not to my words;" and its tendency is to lead the mind away from the truth which the Holy Spirit does mean to teach us, and which is always, when clearly perceived, and rightly improved, "profitable for doctrine, and reproof, and correction, and instruction in righteousness," to the mere figments of the human imagination. Of the persons who indulge in such an abuse of the Holy Scriptures, it may well be said, "They feed on ashes; a deceived heart has turned them aside."

Instead of occupying our time with these human fancies, let us attend to what our Lord here says of this true heavenly bread. It comes down from heaven, in a far higher sense than the manna came down from heaven. The manna was formed in the atmosphere—the ærial heavens—this bread comes down from the heaven of heavens, the true holy place; and it not only, like the manna, supports life, but it gives life to those who are dead, and supports life in those whom it has made alive; and this life, which it at once communicates and sustains, is not that mortal life which the manna, perishing food, temporarily supported, but a divine life, an immortal life; and this bread of God is not, like the manna, restricted to one nation. God gives it "for the life of the world." It is fitted and intended to make truly happy mankind of every kindred, people, and nation, not in one age, but in all the ages of time, through all the ages of eternity.

These ideas, which are all obviously wrapped up in our Lord's words, were probably but imperfectly and indistinctly discerned by the Jews; but they saw plainly that, under the name of "bread of life," he was speaking of something which he wished to represent as very valuable, and they therefore asked him to bestow on

them a gift so precious :—" Lord, evermore give us this bread." ¹

It is impossible to say with certainty whether these words were the expression of serious desire, or of sarcastic scepticism. Even if they were the expression of the first, the desire was obviously a very unenlightened one. It amounted to little more than this, ' If you have so valuable benefits to bestow, we should like to be sharers of them.' When taking the whole circumstances of the case into consideration, I cannot help thinking it more likely that these words, as well as the words of the woman of Samaria on a similar occasion, ² were uttered in a spirit of infidel levity ; as if they had said, ' Indeed ! that is bread worth wishing for.' Taking this view of it, how wonderful is the patience of the Divine Saviour, who, instead of punishing these contemners of his grace, proceeds to tell them, in plain words, what he means by the heavenly, life-giving bread, and to exhibit himself as the divinely appointed, divinely qualified, Saviour of the world !

In either view of the words of the Jews, they stood in need of farther information, and our Lord proceeds to give it them :—" And Jesus said to them, I am the bread of life : he that cometh to me shall never hunger ; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." ³

" The bread of life " is a phrase equivalent to, ' The life-giving bread.' " Life," in the language of our Lord, implies happiness. When he calls himself, then, the " life-giving bread," he intimates that he is the author of true happiness ; that he, that he alone, can make men truly and permanently happy. Some good interpreters have supposed that our Lord, in these words, refers solely to his character as a teacher,—*q. d.*, ' My doctrine, understood and believed, is the appropriate nourishment of the rational, immortal mind. It, and it alone, can make men truly wise, truly good, and truly happy, for ever.'

¹ John vi. 34.

² John iv. 15.

³ John vi. 35.

This is, no doubt, important truth, and it is truth included in our Lord's words ; but we very improperly and unnecessarily limit their signification, if we confine it to an assertion of the salutary nature and effects of our Lord's doctrine. It is not only, it is not chiefly, as a teacher, that Jesus Christ is the author of salvation ; and it is plain that it is not only, it is not chiefly, as a teacher, that he takes to himself the figurative appellation of the " bread of life."

His primary reference is to what he was to do and suffer for the salvation of men. This is plain from what he says at the fifty-first verse : " The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." When our Lord, then, says, " I am the bread of life," the meaning obviously is, ' I—I alone—am the Saviour of men ; I—I alone—can make them happy. Without me, all must die of spiritual hunger ; that is, must be for ever miserable, for the want of those spiritual blessings, which are necessary to make such a being as man really, permanently, happy. By me, from me, all may obtain, in rich abundance, those blessings ; and, in the enjoyment of them, find a happiness, in variety, extent, and duration, every way corresponding to the capacities of their nature, and the immortality of their being.

In the words that follow, our Lord brings the same supremely important and delightful truth, that he—that he alone—is the author of true happiness, before the mind, by two expressive figures ; while he at the same time shows how that true happiness, which he only can bestow, is to be obtained by men : " He that cometh to me shall never hunger ; he that believeth on me shall never thirst."

To " hunger," and " thirst," are here obviously used figuratively, for that restless and dissatisfied state, which rises out of the want of what is necessary to our happiness—a sense of that want—and a craving desire to have that want supplied. That is the state of all men in their natural condition. They want what is necessary to satisfy their under-

standings, their consciences, and their affections. They are, in some measure, conscious of these wants, though, in many cases, but ill informed of their nature and extent; and they are restlessly anxious to find something that will quiet the cravings of the appetite for enjoyment.

Nothing, in the wide range of the material universe, can satisfy this hunger, can quench this thirst: on the contrary, the appetite grows with what it feeds on; and the man who has had the largest share of worldly enjoyments, is generally the farthest removed from real satisfaction. Life, with most men, is a series of unsuccessful experiments to obtain satisfaction to that appetite for enjoyment, which is the very soul of their souls—the principle, end, and aim of their being.

That satisfaction, which never has been, never will be, never can be, found in the world, is to be found in Christ: “He who comes to me shall never hunger; he that believes on me shall never thirst;” that is, ‘He who comes to me—he who believes on me—shall obtain true permanent happiness; he shall have all his wants supplied, and shall be equally delivered from the wretchedness which these wants, and the consciousness of them, must produce, and from the painful restlessness, which the blind desire of having them supplied must occasion.’

But what is it to “come to Christ?” what is it to “believe on Him?” The first is a figurative, the second a literal, description; and it has been common to consider them as quite synonymous—the literal expression being intended as the interpretation of the figurative one. There can be no doubt, that he that comes to the Saviour as the bread of life—the author, that is, both the procurer and the bestower of salvation—and he who believes on him, are substantially the same person. He who comes to the Saviour, believes on him; and he who believes on the Saviour, comes to him. But it does not, by any means, follow, that “coming” and “believing” are, therefore, precisely the

same thing; that the figurative and literal expressions, though referring to the same individual, are expressive of the very same mental affection or exercise.¹

To "believe" on the Saviour as the bread of life, is to believe the truth about him in this character. Now, in the following passage, it seems very plain, that "coming to God," and believing the truth about him, though they must meet in the same individual, are not the same but different things—the one the means by which the other is produced. "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him." "To come to God," in this passage, is descriptive of that enlightened reverential love, and confidence in God, which constitute spiritual, acceptable worship, in which the mind as it were goes forth to him; this state of mind is not the same thing as faith; it is the consequence, the effect, of faith—the result of the truth believed on the mind—and hence the apostle says,—“He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”² He cannot otherwise come to him. This is the way, the only way, of coming to him.

In the same way, to come to Christ as the bread of life—the procurer, and the bestower of true happiness—is descriptive of all those mental affections and exercises, which may be termed the movement of the mind towards him in this character—especially reliance on his atonement as the only expiation of guilt, and implicit submission to his authority as the great teacher of truth and holiness. Now these mental affections and exercises are not properly faith, but the consequences of faith. He that cometh to Christ as the bread of life, must believe on Christ as the bread of

¹ It is curious to see what a strange *non sequitur* the acute Calvin has given us, in his exegesis of these two terms, which, indeed, is the common one: "Venire ad Christum, et credere *idem* in hoc loco valent, sed in priore verbo *fidei effectus exprimitur*." Surely faith, and the effect of faith, are not "*idem*," the same thing. Surely here—"bonus dormitat Homerus."

² Heb. xi. 6.

life. I must believe the truth respecting him as the author of salvation, in order to my mentally going to him under this character. I must know who the physician is, and believe in his skill, in order to my going to him to obtain a cure.

It may here be remarked, by the way, and I apprehend that the remark is of considerable importance, not only to the right interpretation of Scripture, but to the right understanding of the christian plan of salvation, that the case before us is by no means a solitary one, in which figurative descriptions of states of mind originating in faith, have been confounded, by expositors, with faith itself. It is common to say that, "receiving Christ"—"looking to Christ"—"fleeing to Christ"—"laying hold on Christ"—"eating his flesh, and drinking his blood," are all figurative expressions for faith, while the truth is, every one of these figurative expressions is descriptive of a state of mind, in some way analogous to the bodily action referred to, including a variety of sentiments and emotions, all of them however originating in the faith of the truth respecting Christ; so that it would be more accurate, in every view of the subject—whether philological, philosophical, or theological—to consider these figurative expressions, not as synonymous with each other, and all of them as expressive of faith, but as each expressing that state of mind of which it is naturally descriptive, all of which are the result of faith; to say, not that "receiving Christ," "looking to him," "fleeing to him," "laying hold on him," "eating his flesh, and drinking his blood," are faith, but that it is by faith, by faith alone, that men receive Christ, look to him, flee to him, lay hold on him, eat his flesh, and drink his blood. The compilers of our Shorter Catechism seem to have perceived this, when they chose to say, not what many seem to suppose they have said, that faith is "a receiving and resting on Christ alone for salvation;" but that faith is that "*whereby* we receive and rest upon him alone for salvation." This distinction is, if I mistake not, much more than a mere metaphysical nicety.

A distinct apprehension of it will be found of great use in the right interpretation of Scripture, in the right understanding of the christian plan of salvation, and in the right guidance of those exercises of the mind and heart which constitute the essential elements of that spiritual religion, which is "our reasonable service"—"our rational worship."

To return from this short digression, our Lord's declaration, then, is this—'He who, believing the truth respecting me, as the author of salvation, exercises towards me those sentiments and affections which naturally grow out of the faith of this truth, shall be saved by me. He shall obtain that happiness which I, which I alone, can confer. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst."'

Some interpreters have supposed that these words have a direct and sole reference to the heavenly blessedness, to the christian salvation, in its most perfect form, and that what our Lord says is this,—'He who believes the truth respecting me, as the author of salvation, and believing that truth comes to me in the exercise of the appropriate sentiments of mind and heart, shall ultimately obtain from me a happiness which shall completely satisfy all his capacities of enjoyment, and leave him nothing to wish for.' They look forward to that state where all wants are supplied, where all wishes are gratified, where "they hunger no more, neither thirst any more, where the sun does not light on them, nor any heat, but the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne feeds them, and leads them to fountains of living waters, and God wipes away all tears from their eyes."

They have been led into this view, probably by the consideration, that even true Christians, those who by believing on the Saviour have come to him, are, while in the present state, far from having all their spiritual wants supplied, far from being relieved from all painful sense of their spiritual wants. Yet I cannot doubt, that our Lord's promise refers to a blessing which he who in faith comes to him, obtains

immediately on his coming to him, and enjoys just in proportion to the measure of his faith. What our Lord substantially says is, 'I am the author of happiness, and it is by faith in me, as the author of happiness, that individual men are to be made happy.' Our Lord is "full of grace and truth," and if we will but come to him, we shall receive "out of his fulness abundance of grace." If we are straitened it is in ourselves, not in him. If we "hunger and thirst," it is not because he is not able, because he is not willing, to satisfy our hunger and to quench our thirst, but because we, being "of little faith," do not come to him "that we may have life, that we may have it abundantly." The idea intended to be conveyed seems to be this, 'Every one that believing comes to me for happiness shall obtain it. After having tasted the happiness which I have to bestow, he will not expect to find it anywhere else. He will find in me, in me alone, that truth which will satisfy his understanding, that atoning righteousness which will pacify his conscience, that sanctifying influence which will transform his character, that soul-satisfying portion which will fill his heart. By restoring him to God's favour, and image, and fellowship, I will impart everything that is necessary and sufficient to make him truly wise, and good, and happy for ever. No one who comes to me will ever have reason to complain, that he could not find in me what was necessary, what was sufficient, to constitute his happiness.'

These words of our Lord, bring before the mind in a very impressive manner, at once the three important ideas of the magnitude, the abundance, and the duration, of the happiness, which he, and he alone, can confer, and which every one who in believing comes to him, shall assuredly obtain and enjoy according to the measure of his faith. Such was the happiness our Lord had to bestow, and such the way in which men were to obtain a personal interest in this happiness.

But this happiness did not belong to those whom our Lord

was addressing, and the cause of this was to be found in their unbelief, which, considering their advantages, was altogether inexcusable. This seems to be the import of the statement which follows:—"But I said unto you, that ye also have seen me and believe not."¹

The particle rendered "also,"² should probably be rendered "although," as in Luke,— "And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?"³ In the thirtieth verse, the Jews had expressed a wish to have signs, that they might see and believe. Our Lord here says to them, if ye do not believe, it is not for want of seeing. "Ye have seen me." I have been for a considerable time in the midst of you, teaching the truth, and confirming it by my miracles. I have exhibited myself to you as the divinely appointed, qualified, accredited, Saviour; yet though you could not but see my claim, you have disregarded it.

Our Lord seems plainly to refer to something that he had formerly said to these persons.⁴ "I said to you." Some suppose our Lord to refer to something he had said to them on a former occasion. Others to something that he had said at this time, which the evangelist has not recorded. Others to the twenty-sixth verse, which is substantially the same charge which is contained in the words before us. It matters very little which of these references is considered as the true one.

The connection of these words with what follows may be thus stated:—"But though you should reject me, I shall not want followers; though you should shut yourselves out from the enjoyment of that happiness which I come to bestow on mankind, and a participation in which can be obtained in no other way than by believing in me, the object of my mission shall not be frustrated. You may, if you

¹ John vi. 36.

² Luke xviii. 7.

³ "καὶ = καίτις."—THOLUCK.

⁴ "ὅτι denotes quotation."—THOLUCK.

continue in unbelief, you must perish, in consequence of your refusing "the true heavenly bread;" but multitudes—multitudes of the Gentiles, who are the objects of your malignant contempt—will, in the faith of the truth, gladly receive "the bread of life," and eat, and live for ever. You came to me, and yet you did not come to *me*; for, in coming, you supposed me to be a very different person from what I really am. When you but suspected me of being what I really am, you would have none of me. I declined accepting your offered allegiance. You are not the followers I wish, as I am not the leader you wish. But followers of the kind I wish will not be wanting, and they shall be sure of meeting with a kind reception,—“All that the Father giveth me shall come to me: and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”¹

Let us examine these words carefully. We have at least as deep an interest in them as those had to whom they were originally addressed. The first point to be inquired into, is the meaning of the phrase, “All that the Father giveth me,”—literally, “Everything which the Father giveth me.”² Now, what does the Father give the Son? He is in Scripture represented as giving him many things. He “gave him the Spirit without measure.” He gave him “words to speak,” “a commandment to obey,” and “a work to finish.” He gives him “to have life in himself, even as he has life in himself.” He gave him “authority to execute judgment.” He gave him “glory.” He has given him “all judgment,” or rule, and government. He has given him “power over all flesh.” He has given him “all power in heaven and earth.” He has given him “a name above every name.”³ But it is quite plain that, in the passage before us, our Lord is speaking of persons, not of things.

¹ John vi. 37.

² *πάντα ἃ δίδωμι μου ἐκ πατρός.* Πάντα for the masculine, as in 1 John v. 4. Heb. ii. 9. Eph. v. 13. 1 Cor. i. 27.

³ John iii. 34; xiv. 31; xii. 49; xvii. 4; v. 26, 27; xvii. 22; xvii. 2. Matth. xxviii. 18. Phil. ii. 9.

Who these persons are, it is not difficult to discover.—They are all those who come to Christ by believing in him, and are saved by him,—those who come to Christ, who are not cast out by him, the accomplishment of whose salvation is that benignant will of the Father, which the Son came from heaven to earth to perform,—none of whom are to be lost, all of whom are to be raised up at the last day, and to enjoy everlasting life. These are they whom the Father gives the Son. We have thus ascertained who the persons are who are here spoken of,—they are all who shall be saved by Christ Jesus; but the question still remains to be answered, What is meant by their being given by the Father to Christ?

In the language here, as in so many other parts of the New Testament, there seems to be an allusion to modes of expression in the Old, and we must ascertain its origin in order to our satisfactorily discovering its meaning. In the preceding context, our Lord had spoken of himself as the true celestial bread, which, coming down from heaven, giveth life to “the world,” that is, to mankind, without reference to the distinction of Jew and Gentile. The manna was intended for the bodily support of the Jews,—this heavenly bread, for the spiritual nourishment of mankind, of every kindred, and people, and tongue. The liberal, unexclusive character of the salvation which the Messiah came to procure and bestow, is again, we apprehend, referred to in the words before us. The Father had promised to give certain persons to the Son; and all these, without exception, our Lord says, shall come to him. Now, who are the persons whom the Father has promised to give to the Son? The answer is in the passage to which I can scarcely doubt our Lord mentally referred when he used the words: “I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”¹

¹ Psal. ii. 7, 8.

Nor is this promise at all a singular one. "He shall have dominion," says David, speaking in the spirit of his Son and Lord—the King, and the King's Son, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him; all nations shall serve him."¹ "I will give him," says Jehovah by Isaiah, in reference to his righteous servant, "I will give him the many as his portion, and he shall have the strong ones as his spoil."² "Unto him shall the gathering of the people be."³ The "root of Jesse shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek."⁴ "I will give thee for a light to the Gentiles." "Behold, these shall come from far; and, lo, these from the north and from the west; and these from the land of Sinim."⁵ "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not; and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee, because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee."⁶ Viewed in reference to these promises, the words express this idea, 'Vast multitudes of men of all nations, according to the purpose and promise of God, and by the agency of his Spirit, and the instrumentality of his word and providence, shall be given to me, delivered into my hand, so as to acknowledge my claims, believe my doctrines, and enjoy my salvation.'⁷

Still, however, we have not obtained an answer to the question, What is the precise import of the Father's *giving*

¹ Psal. lxxii. 8-11.

² Isa. liii. 12. LXX. Vulg. Patt. Lowth. Dathé. Hengstenberg.

³ Gen. xlix. 10.

⁴ Isa. xi. 10.

⁵ Isa. xlix. 6, 12.

⁶ Isa. lv. 4, 5.

⁷ To "give" and to "deliver to" are plainly synonymous, as used Matth. xi. 27; xxviii. 18: And "to deliver to," in its full form, 'to deliver into the hands of,' is equivalent to 'to commit to the care of'—'to subject to the authority of.'

those multitudes of men of every nation to Christ? By the greater part of evangelical interpreters, the Father's giving of men to Christ has been considered as equivalent to his eternal purpose of mercy in reference to these individuals,—his committing them, as it were, in charge to his Son, in the covenant of peace, to be delivered by him from all the evils in which sin was to involve them. I have no doubt of the truth of this doctrine. It is based on the first principles of religion—those which refer to the Divine character, as the infinitely wise and powerful Author and Governor of the universe,—it is most explicitly taught in Scripture, especially in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and it is necessarily implied in the words now under consideration. Yet I cannot help thinking that the direct reference is not to the Divine purpose, but to its execution. The ancient oracles, to which there seems a reference, are promises. They refer, not to what was past, but what was future. The words, if I mistake not, are intended to be descriptive of that divine influence of which the Father, by the Spirit, is the Author, which is put forth according to the purpose which God has “purposed in himself,” by which men are induced to believe the Gospel, and, in the belief of the Gospel, to come to the Saviour. The being given to Christ by the Father, seems to be the same thing as what, in the forty-fourth verse, is called the being “drawn” or conducted to him by the Father; and that is represented, in the forty-fifth verse, as equivalent to the being “so taught of God,” “hearing and learning of the Father,” as that they come to him. Men are given by God to Christ, when they are brought to him, united to him, by that faith which is the gift of God,—when, under the influence of his Spirit, they are made to come to him—that is, are led, in the belief of the truth, to exercise towards the Saviour all those sentiments of mind and heart which correspond to the different views given, in the Gospel, of his person and work.¹

¹ Calvin seems to refer the word “give” rather to regeneration than to elec-

Though, in this view of the phrase, which appears to me better to suit not only this place, but the other places where it occurs in this gospel, it does not directly express the doctrine of personal election, it necessarily implies it. It ascribes faith to a divine benignant influence, which indicates distinguishing love towards him over whose mind it is exercised, in contradistinction to him over whose mind it is not exercised, and which love, just because it is the love of Him who is eternal and unchangeable, must be itself eternal and unchangeable. To the question—What induces God to exercise on the mind of one man rather than on the mind of another this influence, which is at once necessary and sufficient to bring the sinner to the Saviour? there is only one satisfactory reply—sovereign love. “He has mercy, because he wills to have mercy; he has compassion, because he wills to have compassion.”¹ “All whom the Father giveth me,” is, then, just equivalent to ‘all who through divine influence are led to understand and believe the truth with regard to me, and are, in this way, put under my care as the Saviour;’ and these are, according to the ancient promises, “a number which no man can number, out of every kindred, and people, and nation, and tongue.” ‘All these shall, at the appointed season, “come” to the Saviour, that is, shall exercise towards him all those sentiments of mind and heart to which he is entitled, and which the belief of the truth is calculated to produce, and which nothing else can produce.

“And him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out.”²

tion. “‘Donandi’ verbum perinde valet ac si dixisset Christus ‘quos elegit Pater, eos regenerat et *mihî* in obedientiam Evangelii *addicit*—suâ quasi de manu in manum tradit.’” The word ‘give’ has the same meaning as if Christ had said ‘Those whom the Father hath chosen, he regenerates and gives to me, that they may obey the Gospel’—he hands them over, as it were, to his Son.”—Mr PRINGLE’S translation.

¹ Rom. ix. 18.

² Tholuck supposes the *ἐσθλας* *ἡ* refers to the figure of the kingdom of heaven.—Matth. viii. 12; xxii. 13. Olshausen remarks that the phrase indicates an enclosed, bounded, community of life which the Redeemer came to establish.—Matth. xxv. 10.

The words, "I will not cast out," express two ideas: 'I will not refuse to receive him;' and, 'having received him, I will never abandon him;' but they obviously suggest, and seem to have been intended to suggest, much more than they directly express.¹ It is a phrase of the same kind as "why do you spend money for that which is *not* bread,"—which will do anything rather than nourish you—"and your labour for that which doth *not* profit,"²—which will ruin instead of profiting you? "I will not cast him out," is equivalent to, 'I will give him a kind reception, a hearty welcome. He shall find in me all, and far more than all, he expects; and, so far from ever banishing him from my presence, "he shall never perish, but shall have everlasting life."' The manner in which the prodigal son was welcomed by his father is a beautiful, but still an imperfect, representation of the manner in which every one who comes to the Saviour will be received by him.³

"He that cometh to me," especially when viewed in connection with "all whom the Father giveth me shall come to me," is equivalent to, 'whosoever cometh to me, be he Jew or Gentile, whatever has been his previous condition or character.' This passage, with equal plainness, teaches that nothing short of divine influence will ever bring any man to Christ; and that nothing but a man's refusing to come to Christ can exclude him from participating in the blessings of his salvation.

Every one who is brought under this influence *will* come. It is absolutely certain he shall; but there is no compulsion. The man is not driven, he is led; he is not dragged, he is drawn by "the bands of love and the cords of a man"⁴—conclusive arguments and cogent motives. The discovery, by the teaching of the Holy Spirit, of the sinner's guilt, and depravity, and danger, and of the certain and only mode of deliverance from this guilt, and depravity, and danger, and

¹ "Est Litotes. Non ejiciam = omni modo tuebor. Cap. x. 28."—BENGEL.

² Isa. lv. 2.

³ Luke xv. 20.

⁴ Hos. xi. 4.

misery, makes them glad to come, and to renounce every hope and interest that interferes with coming to him for salvation.

And nothing can prevent the salvation of those who thus come to the Saviour. He will refuse none, he will reject none. None coming to him will he refuse to receive into the number of his people; none who has come to him will he exclude from that number, as Hagar and Ishmael were expelled from the holy family. "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."¹ No degree of previous guilt, no inveterate habits of sin, no secret decree of God, no involuntary mistake, no feebleness in attempting to come to him, will induce him to reject a single individual who, in the faith of the truth, comes to him for salvation.

The complete and everlasting salvation of all who, led by the Father, come to the Son, is represented by our Lord as absolutely certain. "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing,² but should raise it up again at the last day."³ It is the will of God that all who come to Christ should be saved,—and the great design of his coming from heaven to earth was just to accomplish this benignant purpose of God the Father. "I will not," says he, "cast out any who come to me." My sole object in coming from heaven to earth was to execute what is the will, the benignant good pleasure, of the Father. I have no selfish objects to prosecute. I am not come—as you suppose your Messiah is to come—to raise myself to

¹ John x. 28, 29.

² The construction is defective. Instead of *εἰς πάντα*, strict syntax would require *ἐκ πάντων*, and also that *μὴ τι* should be supplied to *ἵνα μὴ ἂν*. The construction is Hebraistic.

³ John vi. 38, 39.

earthly grandeur, and to bestow peculiar external advantages on men of a particular nation. I am come to execute my Father's will, and that is the salvation of *men* of every nation, whom he gives to me—whom he, by the influence of his Spirit, brings to me. It is his will that of these—a goodly number—"the nations of the saved"—far more numerous than Abraham's national descendants, who were to be as the stars of heaven, or as the sand on the sea shore—not one should be lost. It is the Father's will, who hath sent me, that I should lose nothing—that is, that I should suffer nothing to be lost—not merely none of them, but nothing of them—nothing that really forms a part of them—not even their body, which, mouldering into dust in the grave, might seem to be lost—even that will be raised up again at the last day. Not merely is "the spirit to live,"—to be happy "because of righteousness,"—but "the mortal body" is to be "quickened because of the spirit of Christ which dwelt in it." "What is sown in corruption, and weakness, and dishonour, is to be raised in incorruption, power, and glory." "The last enemy, death, is to be destroyed;" and when "the Saviour, whom we look for from heaven, comes, he shall change the vile bodies of his people, and fashion them like unto his own glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself."¹

To mark the great importance of the statement which he had just made, our Lord repeats it with some slight changes and additions. "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day."² This is equivalent to, 'Yes, *this* is the will of him that sent me; or, I repeat it, *this* is the will of him that sent me.' It is obvious he is speaking of the same persons, and of the same blessings. Every one that the Father has

¹ 1 Cor. xv. 26, 43, 44. Phil. iii. 20, 21.

² John vi. 40.

given the Son is obviously descriptive of the same class—as, ‘every one who seeth the Son and believeth on him’—and the not being lost—and the having everlasting life—are just two different ways of expressing the same thing. The principal additional truth brought forward is, that it is through seeing the Son, and believing on him, that a personal interest is obtained in the blessings of the christian salvation.

To “see the Son, and believe on him,” is to apprehend the meaning and evidence of the testimony of God concerning Jesus Christ, as his Son—the divine, the divinely appointed, the divinely accredited, the divinely qualified, Saviour of the world. The will of God, then, as unfolded by the Saviour, is, that all men, of whatever nation, or of whatever previous character, who, under the guidance of the Father—that is, under divine influence—by the belief of the truth, come to Jesus Christ, shall be saved from that endless perdition which they have deserved, and be put in possession of a holy happiness, suited to their compound natures, and enduring throughout the ages of eternity.

In these statements, our Lord gives a satisfactory answer to the two most important questions which can interest the attention of mankind—In what does true happiness consist? and, How is it to be obtained? The answer to the first is—True happiness consists in nothing material, earthly, and perishing; it consists in spiritual, heavenly, eternal blessings. The answer to the second is—Jesus Christ, Jesus Christ alone, is the procurer and bestower of these blessings, and individual men can obtain an interest in them only by believing the truth respecting their Author.

Instead of acquiescing in these statements of the great Teacher, the Jews were dissatisfied with them, and showed their dissatisfaction, by murmurings and cavillings:—“The Jews then murmured at him, because he said, I am the bread which came down from heaven.”¹ They probably

¹ John vi. 41.

attached but indistinct ideas to much that he said. They were, however, generally dissatisfied with it, because it was totally different from what they had anticipated. They had hoped that he would speak to them of raising armies, fighting battles, taking cities, driving the heathen out of the holy land, erecting the throne of David, restoring the kingdom to Israel. Instead of this, to hear only, what must have appeared to them mystical statements, about his being the bread of life which came down from heaven—about those who came to him never hungering, and those who believed on him never thirsting—naturally enough, in their state of mind, produced dissatisfaction.

What particularly dissatisfied them was, his having said that *he* was “the bread which came down from heaven.” From the terms in which they expressed their dissatisfaction, it is obvious that what especially offended them was, his saying that he had “come down from heaven”—that, personally considered, he had a divine origin. It is obvious that this was the sense in which the Jews understood our Lord’s declaration; for, if they had supposed that his words referred merely to the celestial origin of his doctrine, his being the son of Joseph, even although that had been the case, could have been no reason for calling in question his divine mission. And it is equally obvious that the Jews did not misunderstand him. If they had, he would have corrected their misconception, by stating that, when he called himself “the bread of life,” he spoke of himself, just as a teacher of salutary doctrine; and that, by his coming down from heaven, he meant only that he was a divine messenger, and, by necessary consequence, that his doctrine was not so much his as the Father’s, who had sent him. Such remarks, we have no hesitation in saying, our Lord would have certainly made, had the Jews misconstrued his meaning. But, instead of this, he goes on to say, that he had “seen the Father,” in a sense in which no other person ever had seen him; that “he came down from heaven;”

and that "the bread of life" he referred to, was his flesh—himself, as incarnate—"which he was to give for the life of the world."

There can be no reasonable doubt, then, that, in saying he "came down from heaven," our Lord meant to teach the divine origin, not so much of his doctrine, as of himself—to assert, that he personally existed in heaven before he appeared among men, and that, when he came to earth, he came from heaven. The reference is not so much, if at all, to his miraculous conception, as to his personal pre-existence. It deserves notice, that, though the prophets were ready enough to assert the divine origin of their oracles, not one of them ever used such language, as our Lord so often used, of having been in heaven, and having come from heaven.

Understanding our Lord's words in this way, the Jews said: "Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? how is it then that he saith, I came down from heaven?"¹ They were ignorant of the facts respecting our Lord's supernatural human origin. They had always understood that he was the son of Joseph and Mary, with whom, as residing in the same district of country, many of them probably were acquainted; and it seemed to them presumptuous and absurd in such a person to lay claim to divine origin—to say, "I came down from heaven."

On hearing these murmurings, "Jesus therefore answered and said unto them, Murmur not among yourselves. No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath

¹ John vi. 42.

seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die.”¹

The substance of our Lord's reply may be thus stated: ‘Murmur not; I have stated only the truth, of which I have given you abundant evidence. Ye ought not to murmur, but to believe; and yet, your murmuring, unreasonable as it is, does not surprise me. It is just what, with your mode of thinking, might have been expected; and it is just what may continue to be expected, till you “repent,” change your mind—till you are brought to another and better mind by divine truth—under divine influence—producing its appropriate effects upon you: “No man can come to me, except my Father, who hath sent me, draw him.” By your murmuring, you make it evident that you have not come to me—that you are not disposed to come to me. With your present views, you will never come to me; you must be born again—you must be converted, and become as little children. No man entertaining the views you do of the design of the Messiah's mission, and nature of his kingdom, can come to me—can embrace me as the Messiah. He must be drawn by him who sent me—the Father, God—in order to his coming to me.’ The Jews, under the influence of carnal motives, had come to Jesus the man, wishing to obtain from him temporal blessings; but, entirely destitute of a spiritual knowledge and sensibility, which God the Father alone could give them, they had not come—they could not come—to Jesus, the Messiah, for the spiritual blessings which they really were in need of, and which he had to bestow. They had not been led, or drawn, of God to Capernaum. Their own carnal views and expectations had brought them thither.

¹ John vi. 43-50.

The language is figurative, but the meaning is not at all obscure. By divine truth, understood and believed, under divine influence, he who is most indisposed—so indisposed as to be morally incapable of embracing Jesus Christ as the divine, and divinely appointed, and qualified, and accredited, Saviour of men—will become capable, by being made willing, of most cordially coming to him, receiving him, trusting in him, loving him, submitting to him. No Jew, blind to the true meaning of the divine oracles, with regard to the Messiah, could acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. No Jew, the eyes of whose mind, by divine influence, were opened to the true meaning of these oracles, could help acknowledging him. Our Lord's words, though used with a direct reference to those whom he addressed, express a great general truth. No man, while he retains the habits of thought and feeling, that are common to all men—unchanged by divine influence—who is seeking for happiness in sensible, present, things, will ever cherish towards Jesus Christ those sentiments and affections to which he is entitled. In order to this, he must be "drawn" to him "by the Father;" that is, divine truth, under divine influence, must find its way into his mind, and enlightened, and impelled, and guided by these, he will come to the Saviour.

A man needs only to reflect on what is the natural state of human sentiment and feeling, to see the indubitable truth of our Lord's remark. The salvation of Christ is most exactly suited to the sinner's necessities, but it is not at all suited to his native tastes and inclinations. It is too good for him—too spiritual to suit the carnal heart—too humbling to please the proud heart. It is too holy for the willing slave of sin—too heavenly for him who is "of the earth earthy." Indeed, how can one, under the influence of pride and the love of sin, approve of a method of salvation which opposes every corrupt bias of the human heart? How can such a one cordially acquiesce in that plan of redemption, which implies that he is justly condemned, and infi-

nitely deserving of blame—that he not only has no claim on justice, but that his guilt is so great as to render the exercise of mercy incompatible with the Divine glory, without the mediation and satisfaction of the incarnate Son of God—and that he could not be suffered to escape the curse of the law, but through the atonement of Christ? How can a man who has a high conceit of himself, and of his own performances, admit that they are utterly insufficient to counterbalance the guilt of his smallest sin? How can a man, blind to the Divine glory, see his obligations to obedience? or how can one, who does not feel his obligations to love and obey the Most High, see sin to be infinitely evil? And how can a man, who practically denies the evil of sin, truly value the Saviour from sin? Is it possible, that the man who does not believe that he ever did anything worthy of death, should see any propriety, wisdom, or equity, in another's dying for him, even one of infinite dignity? Can an enemy of the law love Him that magnified and made it honourable, and love Him so much the better, on this very account, because he hath most satisfactorily vindicated the Legislator from all suspicion of undue severity in punishing sin, and from all appearance of conniving at sin in pardoning it? How can a man, wise in his own conceit, come to Christ as a prophet, and, sitting down at his feet, receive every one of his words? How can a man, full of the spirit of self-justification, come to Christ as a priest, and place all his hope of pardon, and acceptance, and salvation, on his obedience to death, as “the Just one in the room of the unjust?” How can a man who, in his heart, is an utter enemy to God, come to Christ as a king, and endure hardness, as a good soldier, in fighting against all that is opposed to the Divine will and glory? How can a man, who is in love with sin, and idolatrously attached to the present world, believe that it is worth his while to part with all for the Saviour's sake, and to become a stranger and pilgrim upon the earth, “choosing rather to suffer afflic-

tion with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season—esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than any earthly treasure.”¹ No man, with an unchanged mind and heart, will ever embrace the christian salvation.

And the change which is absolutely necessary, is a change which God alone can effect. It is by his drawing men that they are induced to come to Christ. By the “drawing” of the Father we are to understand, as is evident from the following verse, the influence of the Holy Spirit, and the cogency of divine truth, understood and believed. It is by being made to hear and learn of the Father, that men are drawn to Christ. It is because men do not understand and believe the truth, that they cannot come to the Saviour, and depraved men never will understand and believe that truth, till the Spirit so fix their minds on its meaning and evidence, that they cannot help understanding and believing it, and when men understand and believe the truth, coming to the Saviour follows as a matter of course—they can no longer help coming to him ;² and when any man, whosoever he be, Jew or Gentile, however guilty and depraved, drawn by the Father, by his word and Spirit, comes to the Son, our Saviour declares that the final salvation of that person is secure. He is one of those who are given to him of the Father, and he

¹ I gratefully acknowledge my obligations to a sermon by Dr Smalley, an American divine, for many of the thoughts in the preceding paragraph. The sermon is entitled “The Inability of the Sinner to Comply with the Gospel; his Inexcusable Guilt in not complying with it, and the Consistency of these with each other.” Dr Ryland follows a similar train of thought in his sermon entitled “The Efficacy of Divine Grace Explained and Defended.”

² I am indebted to Dr Bennet for drawing my attention to a striking passage in Augustine’s Homilies on this passage. After quoting Virgil’s words, “*Trahit sua quemque voluptas*,” he beautifully says (I quote Dr B.’s translation):—“It is not necessity, but pleasure; not compulsion, but delight. Have the senses of the body, then, pleasures; and is the mind destitute of its pleasures? You show a green bunch to the sheep, and you draw it. Nuts are shown to children, and they are attracted. Whither we run we are drawn, for it is by love that we are drawn. His own peculiar pleasure draws every one. And does Christ revealed by the Father not draw?” Luther says:—“God allures us by his *quasi caritas*—his love of man (Tit. iii. 4). God is set before us as our dearest friend, so loving us, as to give his only begotten Son for us. It is *thus* he draws us.”

shall not be lost, nothing of him shall be lost. He shall be "raised up at the last day."

It is plain from this passage, that the inability of coming to Christ, under which men labour, is not physical, but moral. It does not originate at all in a want of those intellectual and active faculties which are necessary to come to Christ, but entirely in an indisposition arising out of wilful ignorance, and the love of sin, and of the world. It is like the inability of the intemperate man to keep himself sober, the inability of Joseph's brethren to speak peaceably to him. If men cannot come to Christ, it is just because they will not come to him. They who under the gospel dispensation "are untaught of God," are so, because they refuse to learn of him. The appropriate means of removing this kind of inability, is the statement of the truth and its evidence. This is all men can do. Divine influence is necessary, absolutely necessary, to fix the mind on the truth and its evidence, so as to produce faith, and the native consequences of that faith; and that influence never was, never will be, refused to him who honestly desires it. What would men have more? Would they have men left to themselves? Then all must perish. Would they have God to compel men to receive salvation? This were to do violence to man's nature, God's work! Would they have men saved as they are—in sin? This were to require an impossibility, and to do violence at once to the constitution of man, and the nature of God, to disgrace the Divine character, and overturn the Divine throne. The sum of the whole matter is, no man perishes under the gospel dispensation, but in consequence of his own wilful obstinacy: no man is saved, but in consequence of a divine influence originating in free sovereign mercy. Man is his own destroyer, God is man's only Saviour. If we perish, our damnation is entirely of ourselves. If we are saved, our salvation is entirely of God.¹

¹ Fuller expresses this truth with his usual force and point: "Upon the whole, we see from these passages—John v. 40; vi. 44, 45, 65, taken together—

The rejection and the reception of Christianity by mankind, will, according to the different views taken of the subject, appear equally wonderful to a considerate mind. When we think of the perspicuity of its oracles, the reasonableness of its doctrines, the equity of its precepts, the simplicity of its ordinances, the abundance of its evidence, the benignity of its spirit, and the varied usefulness of its tendency, it seems strange that anything further than the calling on men to make Christianity the subject of considerate thought, should be necessary to secure its universal reception. But when, on the other hand, we think first of that holy spirituality which constitutes the most characteristic feature of that religion, and then reflect on that carnality of mind, that depravity of heart, that secular ungodly spirit, which are the leading attributes of fallen humanity, we cease to wonder that Christianity, with all its recommendations, should be rejected by the great majority of men to whom its claims are presented, and we begin to think it strange, that any of a race so corrupt and earthly, should ever cordially embrace a system so pure and heavenly. The depravity of man is quite sufficient to account for the general rejection of Christianity. It can be satisfactorily accounted for on no other principle; and few considerations place the extent and depth of human depravity in a more striking point of view than this, that it does produce the general rejection of such a system as Christianity, and would, unless counteracted by an influence from a higher quarter, and of a more potent efficacy, produce its universal rejection. While the general rejection of Christianity is thus accounted for, without the slightest disparagement of its excellence, its cordial reception in any instance by such a being as fallen man, can be satisfactorily traced to no cause but a divine influence so fixing the attention on the truth and its evidence, as that it finds its way as truth into the corrupted mind and heart, and

first, that if any man is lost, whom he has to blame for it—HIMSELF; secondly that if any man is saved, whom he has to praise for it—GOD."

there, by its own power in producing light and purity, establishes for itself a permanent, and a welcome, and a suitable dwelling place.

The only satisfactory answer to the questions, *Why is the Gospel not cordially received by all who hear it? why does any man reject it? why do the majority of men reject it?*—is, ‘Man is a depraved being; he “minds earthly things;” he “loves darkness rather than light.”’ And the only satisfactory answer that can be given to the questions, *Why is the Gospel cordially received by any man? why is it not obstinately rejected by all?*—is, ‘God, in these cases, by a supernatural influence, has counterworked human depravity; the Father has drawn to the Son.’ The answer to the first class of questions is, ‘Man is evil—wholly evil;’ the answer to the second is, ‘God is good—infinitely, sovereignly good.’ Such is substantially the account which our Lord gives of this most interesting subject in the passage just illustrated. He plainly states that mankind, unchanged by divine influence, labours under such an indisposition to embrace his Gospel, and the blessings which it at once reveals and conveys, as amounts to a moral incapacity,—an indisposition which nothing short of divine influence can remove: “No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him;” and with equal plainness he states that this influence, while absolutely necessary, is also fully competent to produce the desired effect,—“All that the Father hath given me shall come to me.” Every man that is drawn of the Father, every man that is “taught of God,” “every man that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh to me.” Our Lord confirms his doctrine by an appeal to Old Testament Scripture,—“It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.”¹

¹ John vi. 45.

It has been questioned whether, by using the phrase, "in the prophets," our Lord meant to convey the idea that the sentiment which he quoted was to be found in that part of the inspired volume to which the Jews gave the general name, "The Prophets," or that this sentiment is expressed by more than one of those inspired men usually denominated prophets. Did he refer to one passage, or to several? It does not matter much how the question is resolved, though it is certain that this formula of citation is sometimes used when only one passage in one prophet is referred to.¹ The precise words here quoted are not to be found in any of the prophets,—the sentiment is to be found in more than one. The probability is, that our Lord's direct reference is to a passage in the prophecy of Isaiah,²—"And all thy children,"—the prophet is addressing the spiritual church, under the administration of the Messiah,—"*And all thy children shall be taught of the Lord.*" The same sentiment is to be found in the prophecy of Jeremiah;³—the prophet is plainly speaking of the state of things under the Messiah,—"*I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts,*"—that is, I will make them understand, and believe, and love, the revelation I make to them; "*and they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them.*"

Our Lord's object in making this citation seems to be, to show his hearers that his doctrine, that men must be divinely taught in order to their becoming his genuine disciples, was in exact conformity with the declarations of the ancient prophets. His argument plainly takes for granted, what he had so satisfactorily proved by his miracles, that he was "the Prophet who should come into the world,"—"the Son, whom the Father had sealed and sent,"—the promised Messiah. The substance of the quotation and argument is

¹ Acts xiii. 40.² Isa. liv. 13.³ Jer. xxxi. 33, 34.

this: 'All the Messiah's subjects are represented by the ancient prophets as taught of God; they become his subjects, not in consequence of natural descent, or mere *human* teaching, but of a spiritual birth, and *divine* teaching.' In perfect conformity with these prophetic statements, our Lord in effect says, 'I do not expect any man to become my disciple except he is taught of God; and I expect that all who are taught of God shall become my disciples.' "Every one that hath heard, and learned of the Father, cometh to me." The particle "therefore," which seems rather to perplex the sense, does not appear to belong to the original text.¹

"Hearing, and learning of the Father," is equivalent to being made by the Father so to understand and believe the revelation of his will about coming to Christ, as to be disposed to comply with it—as to be drawn to him. The Father made known his will by the ancient prophets, who, as our Lord says, "testified of him." He made known his will by John the Baptist, who stated the truth very plainly respecting not only the divine mission of our Lord, but also respecting the design of his mission, and the nature of the blessings of his kingdom. The great body of the Jews did not understand, and so could not believe, in their true meaning, the Father's testimony to the Son by the prophets and John the Baptist. In one sense they heard; but they did not "hear and learn of the Father." But all who, under divine influence, had been made to understand and believe that testimony, gladly and gratefully came to him, that they might receive from him the blessings he was divinely qualified and divinely commissioned to bestow.

The doctrine of our Lord in this passage, is quite coincident with that of his apostle. "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."²

¹ Wetstein, Bengel—Griesbach, Tischendorf.

² 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

No man who is ignorant of Christ and his salvation, will ever embrace them. No man who knows and believes the truth about them, can reject them. All men are naturally ignorant and unbelieving on this subject. No human teaching will suffice to remove the ignorance and unbelief. God—God alone—can do this; and wherever he does it, men embrace the Saviour and his salvation. The ignorance and unbelief which keep sinners at a distance from the Saviour, are wilful, and therefore most criminal. The divine influence which removes this ignorance and unbelief, is sovereignly benignant,—might justly be withheld from all, and when exerted on any, proves, not the superior worth of him who is the subject of it, but the infinitely free kindness of him who is the author of it; so that he who is never the subject of this influence, has no cause to complain, while he who is, has strong reasons for adoring acknowledgment, and powerful motives to grateful obedience.

To prevent his hearers from supposing that some direct communication of information from the Father was necessary to men's becoming his genuine disciples, he tells them, that in speaking of the necessity of hearing and learning of the Father, he had no reference to such direct communication,—a mode of communication, which he states to be peculiar to himself,—as the sent and sealed Son. "Not that any hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father;"¹ *q. d.* 'When I speak of being drawn by the Father, of being taught of God, of hearing and learning of the Father, I do not mean any direct immediate communication from the Father's essential divinity. He makes himself known in his word. He has spoken in times past by the prophets. He has spoken in these last days by John the Baptist, and by the Son. That man is drawn of God who, under the influence of his Spirit, is made to apprehend the meaning and evidence of such revelations as he has thus

¹ John vi. 46.—*ὁ ὢν παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ.* Chap. vii. 29. . .

made of his character and will. Such direct and immediate knowledge of God as bears an analogy to seeing visible objects, has never been vouchsafed to any, save to him "who is of God. He has seen the Father."

"He who is of God," has been interpreted as equivalent to, 'He who is commissioned of God—he who is sent of God.' Though the words naturally enough express this idea, I do not think that this is the meaning here, for the kind of knowledge of God spoken of, is not that common to all who have been sent of God; it pertains to our Lord (for he plainly refers to himself) not in common with the class of divine messengers, to which he belonged. It is a distinctive peculiarity of him as "the Only Begotten of God," as one standing in an absolutely singular kind of essential relation to the Father. "No man,"¹—no one, neither man nor angel,—"hath seen God," neither can see him. No man has obtained, no man can obtain, a direct and immediate knowledge of God. "The only begotten Son, he hath declared him."² He who is "of God,"³ seems equivalent to, He who is "God's own Son," the Son of himself, his proper Son. He, he alone, has seen God. He knows him, not only in the works of his hand, and the dispensations of his providence, and the declarations of his word, but he knows him directly and immediately. He sees, not his shadow, which is all that creatures do—He sees his substance, he sees him as he is. He is perfectly and intuitively acquainted with the whole truth in reference to his nature, as well as his will.

All this statement, from the beginning of the forty-fourth verse, seems introductory to what follows. "The Jews murmured because he said he was the bread which came down from heaven." He replied, 'Murmur not. There is no sufficient ground for murmuring. I have said nothing but what is true,—though I do not wonder at your murmuring,—for not having been drawn by the Father, not having

¹ οὐδείς.² John i. 18.³ ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ.

been taught of him, not having heard and learned of him, you cannot receive, you labour under a moral incapacity of believing, my sayings, however true—of receiving my benefits, however precious. Murmuring, though highly culpable in you, is just what, with your views, might be expected from you. Nevertheless, I assure you I have only asserted the truth,—“Whether ye will hear, or whether ye will forbear”—whether ye will believe and rejoice, or doubt and murmur,—it is indubitably true. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life.”¹ I have everlasting life, real permanent happiness, to bestow on mankind; and the way for any individual to obtain this real permanent happiness, is to believe on me, to credit the truth respecting me, the truth spoken by me; and every one, be he a Jew or a Gentile, who thus believes the truth, shall obtain real permanent happiness.’

“I am that bread of life.”² ‘You did not misapprehend me, when you thought I appropriated to myself the appellation, “the true bread,” “the bread from heaven,” “the bread of God.” I indeed am all that these emphatic figurative expressions imply. I am that *life-giving* bread, for that is the force of the expression “bread of life,” just as “tree of life,” is life-giving tree; “water of life,” life-giving water; “spirit of life,” life-giving spirit. I am the procurer and bestower of immortal happiness.’

Our Lord goes on to compare or contrast himself with that bread which the Jews were accustomed to call ‘the bread of heaven’—the manna. That miraculous food, highly as they estimated it, was only the corruptible sustenance of a mortal life. “Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead.”³ It could not procure for them the indefinite extension even of natural life. They who were fed with the corn of heaven, as well as they who were fed with the corn of the earth, died, and returned to their earth.

¹ John vi. 47.

² John vi. 48.

³ John vi. 49.

But "this," very probably pointing to himself, "this is the bread"—equivalent to, 'I am the bread,'—"which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die."¹ 'I am come from heaven to earth, not for the purpose of protracting for a season this mortal life, but that whosoever eateth me as the bread of life,' that is, 'whosoever exercises towards me as a Saviour those mental sentiments and affections, which are analogous to the bodily action of eating in reference to food,—he who treats me in the way which, in the nature of things, is calculated, as well as by Divine appointment destined, to derive from me the blessings I have to bestow, he shall never die;' that is, 'not, he shall be exempted from the ordinary lot of fallen man, in his case "the dust shall not return to the earth as it was,"'² but 'he shall obtain a higher kind of life which shall never terminate. "He shall not perish, but shall have everlasting life."'

To mark the importance of the sentiment, he repeats it, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever."³ The question of greatest importance here is, What are we to understand by eating Christ Jesus as the bread of life? Happily, there is no difficulty in answering the question. Eating is that which, in consequence of the natural constitution of things, is necessary to our deriving the advantage from bread, which it is intended to communicate,—that is, bodily nourishment. We may look at bread long enough, we may smell it, we may handle it, we may talk about it, it will do us no good. We must eat it, if we wish to be nourished by it. Now, what is it that is necessary and sufficient to our deriving from Jesus, as the Saviour, the blessings we need, and which he has to bestow. We may speculate about him, we may talk about him, we may dispute about him, but unless we believe in him, we shall never be

¹ John vi. 50.² Eccles. xii. 7.³ John vi. 51.

personally interested in his salvation. To “eat” the bread of life is just, by the faith of the truth, to obtain a personal interest in the blessings of Christ’s salvation.

Our Lord then proceeds to give them some farther most important information as to the manner in which he obtains for, and bestows on, mankind, real permanent happiness; employing a figurative representation corresponding to the general figurative view he had already given of his saving character as the bread of life. “The bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.”¹

The meaning of these words is, ‘I am the Saviour of the world; and the manner in which I am to save the world is by devoting myself to death in their room, as the victim for their transgressions.’ Let us see how this sentiment can be brought out of these words—“I will give my flesh for the life of the world.” “The flesh” of our Lord is plainly just equivalent to his body, or himself as embodied. To “give his flesh,” is to devote himself as a sacrifice—voluntarily to lay down his life. This is plain enough. But what is it “to give his flesh for the life of the world.” “The world” is just equivalent to mankind, without reference to distinction, Gentiles as well as Jews, and “to give his flesh for their life” is either ‘to give himself, to devote himself, in their room—to lay down his life for their forfeited life—to give his soul as a ransom for their souls—to die in their room, in order to save them from the death which they deserved;’ or, what comes materially to the same thing, ‘to lay down his life in order to obtain life—happiness—for them.’ The truth embodied in these words, is that cardinal doctrine of Christianity, that the death of Christ, as the divinely-appointed piacular victim for the sins of men, is the grand means of securing man’s salvation.

Now, says our Lord, “This is the bread I will give” to men. It is thus that I save them. It is thus I preserve

¹ John vi. 51.—“*σώζω*, with the genitive, denoting substitution. Rom. v. 6. Luke xxii. 19, 20. 1 Tim. ii. 6. Tit. ii. 14. Rom. viii. 31.”—PKE SMITH.

them from destruction. It is thus I secure for them everlasting life.

This passage very clearly shows how far they are mistaken who consider our Lord as calling himself "the bread of life," merely or chiefly as the teacher of a salutary doctrine, a doctrine which, understood and believed, is calculated to make men truly wise, good, and happy—to nourish them up unto eternal life. It is the truth, with regard to his saving character generally, that he intends to bring before our mind; and especially that all important truth, that he is a Saviour from sin and its consequences, by bearing, and bearing away, the sin, the guilt, of the world.

Such, beyond all question, is the true meaning of our Lord's figurative declarations, that he was the "bread of life;" that "the bread which he gives is his flesh, which is given for the life of the world;" and that he who would live for ever "must eat of this bread." It may seem strange, at first sight, that our Lord, in stating these primary doctrines respecting the manner in which he, by his death, was to accomplish the salvation of men, and the manner in which men were to obtain a personal interest in the salvation accomplished by him, instead of unfolding them in plain literal expressions, should have wrapped them up in metaphorical language, and employed figures which, even to us, seem somewhat harsh, and which, to those to whom the discourse was originally addressed, could be only in a very limited degree intelligible. If, however, we judge of our Lord's discourse on the obviously fair principle, "In every work regard the author's end," nothing will seem wonderful here but the wisdom of the divine teacher.

It plainly was not our Lord's design to communicate at this time to these men, clear views respecting the nature of the salvation, which HE, the Messiah, was to accomplish, and the manner in which this salvation was to be obtained through him. In the present state of their minds, they were plainly incapable of receiving such information. His object was to

show them, that the truth on these subjects was something totally different from what they had been accustomed to consider as the truth, and to convey that truth under the veil of metaphor into their minds, so as to secure its becoming a subject of reflection—truth which, if presented in its naked simplicity, would have called forth such a host of prejudices, as would have prevented its finding entrance into the mind at all. His statements were intentionally enigmatical and startling. They were so framed, as that, while they could not be readily understood, they could not be easily forgotten. The truth was wrapped in these “dark sayings,” but it required consideration, and coming events and clearer revelations, fully to unfold it. The present object was to arrest attention, to create interest, to excite inquiry. The more, then, the statements, while containing nothing but truth, could be made to wear the air of paradox, so much the better obviously were they fitted to gain the end in view, to draw forth the question,—‘What can he intend by such strange assertions? Surely more is meant than meets the ear.’ Such was the effect which our Lord’s statements actually did produce on the minds of many who heard them.

“The Jews therefore,”—that is, in consequence of his having made the paradoxical declaration that he would give his flesh as bread to men,—“The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?”¹ It is difficult, or rather impossible, to say what was the precise state of mind which this question indicated on the part of those who proposed it. It is not unlikely that it expressed different sentiments in different individuals. With some it probably was a contemptuous expression of utter incredulity, grounded on the alleged obvious absurdity of the statement made: *q. d.*, ‘The man is mad; can any absurdity exceed this? We are to live for

¹ John vi. 52.

ever by eating the flesh of a living man !' With others, who thought that neither our Lord's words nor works were like those of a madman, the question probably was equivalent to a statement—' These words must have a meaning different from their literal signification, but what can that meaning be ? '

These " strivings " of the Jews about the meaning of our Lord's words, were " among themselves." None of them seem to have stated their sentiments to our Lord, but he was perfectly aware of what was going on among them. He does not, however, proceed to explain his former statements. They were not ready for such an explication. It would have been worse than lost on them. Instead of illustrating his statement, he reiterated it. He in no degree explains away what had seemed strange, absurd, incredible, or unintelligible. On the contrary, he becomes, if possible, more paradoxical and enigmatical than ever, in order that his statement might be more firmly rooted in their memory, and that they might the more earnestly inquire, ' What can these mysterious words mean ? ' He tells them that, strange and unintelligible, and incredible, and absurd, as his statements might appear, he had said nothing but what was indubitably true, and incalculably important.

" Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life ; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed." ¹ Though those to whom our Lord originally addressed these words, had not the means of fully understanding them, when they were uttered to them, we surely ought to find no difficulty in discovering their meaning. Our interest in them is as deep as that of those who heard them from the living lips of the incarnate Saviour ;

¹ John vi. 53-55.

and they are indeed as really addressed by him to us as to them.

These words are the following out of the figure employed by our Lord in the fifty-first verse. "I will give my flesh"—my body—myself as embodied—a peculiar victim, an expiatory sacrifice, in the room of the forfeited lives of mankind, in order to secure their happiness; and mankind, in order to be the better of this, must feed on this sacrifice. The Son of Man must undergo a violent death, in the room of guilty men. His sacrificed body, when spiritually fed upon, is the principle and nourishment of an eternal life, a never-ending happiness. His "blood shed for the remission of sins," spiritually "drunk"—received—appropriated—secures a happy immortality. Every man who does not eat this spiritual food, and drink this spiritual drink, is in a state of spiritual death. Every one who does eat of this spiritual food, and drink of this spiritual drink, shall immediately enter on the enjoyment of a holy, happy state of spiritual being, which shall never terminate, and even the mortal part of his nature shall, through the power of the Redeemer's sacrifice, at the close of the present state of things, put on immortality.

The question of greatest importance to the satisfactory interpretation of this most interesting passage is, What is meant by "eating the flesh," and "drinking the blood of the Son of man." We may remark by the way, that our Lord plainly admits his Messiahship, by indentifying himself with the Son of Man.

The "flesh and blood" of our Lord, is a phrase equivalent to his sufferings and death, as one who gives himself for the life of the world; or in other words, to Jesus Christ suffering and dying, the just one in the room of the unjust, that he may bring men to God; the Lamb of God whose blood was shed, and whose flesh was consumed, on the altar of divine justice, as the victim for the sins of men.

The sacrificed Saviour is represented as the food of the soul, his shed blood as the elixir of immortality. The

figure, like the emblem in the Lord's Supper, is double, but the signification is one. The atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, is at once absolutely necessary, and completely sufficient, for the salvation of men. It is through that atonement, through that atonement alone, that any of the guilty, depraved, wretched children of men can obtain forgiveness, and sanctification, and true permanent happiness; and through this atonement every guilty, depraved, wretched man, may obtain forgiveness, and sanctification, and true permanent happiness.

Now, how is the individual sinner to obtain for himself a personal interest in this deliverance from guilt, and depravity, and endless ruin, for the attainment of which, in the case of any man, this atoning sacrifice was necessary—for the attainment of which, in the case of every man, this atoning sacrifice is sufficient? The answer to that question, the most interesting certainly that can engage the mind of a sinner, is, in the figurative language of our Lord,—He must “eat the flesh, he must drink the blood, of the Son of Man.” If he does not, “there is no life in him;” he continues in spiritual death, in that state of condemnation, and moral pollution, and hopeless wretchedness, into which his sin has brought him. If he does, he hath eternal life, he enjoys a state of spiritual sensibility, activity, and enjoyment, which shall never end—a state of blessedness in the enjoyment of the Divine favour, of holy conformity to the Divine image, of true permanent happiness, and even his mortal, his dead body, shall in due time be quickened, and “mortality” in him “be swallowed up of life.”

But the question comes back on us, What is it to eat the flesh and to drink the blood of the Son of Man, on which the enjoyment of such inappreciably valuable benefits is suspended? Some learned, but certainly not in this case judicious, interpreters,¹ have considered these words as having a

¹ Chrysostom, Hackspan, Maldonatus, &c.

reference to the Lord's Supper, and I am afraid that, in very many cases, superstitious notions with regard to the efficacy of that ordinance, have originated in, or been strengthened by, this mistaken view of these words of our Lord. The Lord's Supper was not instituted till long after these words were spoken. The observance of that ordinance is not in every case necessary to salvation. There can be no reasonable doubt that many are in heaven who never participated in the Lord's Supper, and there can be as little doubt that many are in hell who have participated in it. It is not true of every one who has not eaten the emblem of the flesh of the Son of man, and who has not drunk the emblem of his blood, that he has no life in him; nor is it true of every one that has eaten and drunk these emblems, that he has everlasting life. The reference then is not, cannot be, to the Lord's Supper.¹

But it is not enough that we know what eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man does not mean; it is of infinite importance that we should know what these expressions do mean. Now, I apprehend the most satisfactory way of getting an answer to that question is to propose another. When Jesus Christ, as dying in the room of men to obtain their salvation, is represented as the food of the immortal mind, what is it that, in the economy of grace, serves the purpose of enabling individual sinners to derive from him the personal enjoyment of that pardon, and holiness, and eternal happiness, which his atoning sacrifice is at once necessary and sufficient to procure for men,—a purpose analogous to that which eating and drinking, according to the constitution of nature, serves, in enabling a man to derive nourishment from articles of food? No person, who has read the New Testament with any care, can hesitate for

¹ "Credere in eum, hoc est manducare panem vivum."—AUGUSTIN. "Ne syllaba quidem hujus sexti capitis de sacramento loquitur, non modo quod sacramentum nondum esset institutum, sed multo magis, quod ipsa sermonis et sententiarum consequentia de fide incarnati verbi Christum loqui clare ostendit.—LUTHER.

a moment as to the answer that should be given to this question. It is *faith*. It is the belief of the truth respecting Christ Jesus as the only and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners, in consequence of his having given himself, in the room of the guilty, “a sacrifice and an offering of a sweet-smelling savour to God.” It is the belief of this truth which, by Divine appointment, interests the sinner in all the blessed effects of that atoning sacrifice. It is the believer, the believer alone, that by this sacrifice is brought to God—made an inheritor of everlasting life. It is by the faith of the truth that men are justified; it is by the faith of the truth that men are sanctified; it is by the faith of the truth that men are saved: and this truth respecting the atoning death of Jesus Christ is the grand central principle, with the belief of which the enjoyment of the blessings of the christian salvation is so often, in Scripture, represented as indissolubly connected.

This, then, is the fundamental principle of Christianity, so strikingly taught us under these figures: No man capable of believing, who does not believe the great cardinal principle of Christianity, that Jesus Christ, the divine, and divinely appointed and qualified, Saviour of men, has made atonement for sin by the sacrifice of himself, can be a partaker of the christian salvation. He is in his sins, dead in his sins, condemned already, the wrath of God abides on him; and if he continue and die an unbeliever, he must die the second death. On the other hand, every man who really believes this truth, is, of course, personally interested in all the blessings of the christian salvation. He shall never perish; he shall have everlasting life; his sins are forgiven him, for Jesus’ name’s sake; he is made accepted in the Beloved; he is “transformed by the renewing of his mind;” he has hope, and joy, and “peace in believing;” his spirit lives because of his justification; and though the body must die because of sin, He who raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, shall in due time quicken his mortal body,

because of the Spirit who dwells in him. Such are the glorious results of eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of Man—that is, of believing the truth respecting his atoning sacrifice.¹

Let us beware, however, of supposing that there is some mystical power in the act of believing. There is no more mystical power in the act of believing than in the analogous act of eating. The nourishing power is in the food eaten. The saving power is in the truth believed, or, rather, in the Saviour, whom that truth makes known to the mind. Accordingly, our Lord does not add, ‘for eating and drinking are exercises of great potency;’ but, “for my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed;”—‘My flesh is truly nourishing, my blood is truly refreshing,’—that is, ‘My atoning sacrifice secures everything that is necessary and sufficient to make man really, permanently happy, to deliver him from evil in all its forms and degrees for ever, and to fill with an overflow of holy enjoyment all the ever-enlarging capacities of his intellectual and moral nature during the entire eternity of his being.’ But as the most nourishing food will not nourish unless it is eaten, so this all-perfect source of salvation will be of no use to us, unless, by believing the truth about it, we drink of its vivifying waters.

There are two very plain but apparently ill understood principles, on this subject, which, as we value our souls, we ought never to lose sight of. It is the *truth* respecting Christ’s atoning sacrifice that must be believed in order to salvation; and, in order to salvation, this truth must be *believed*.

It is not believing anything that will save us, just as it is

¹ Neander thus paraphrases John vi. 53-58:—“Except ye receive my divine-human life within you, make it as your own flesh and blood, and become thoroughly penetrated by the divine principle of life which Christ has imparted to human nature, and himself realised in it, ye cannot partake of eternal life.” I am not sure that I quite understand this, but I do not think that the profoundly learned and pious interpreter has so happily here, as in many cases, apprehended our Lord’s meaning.

not eating anything that will nourish us. If a man eat poison, he will be killed; if he eat innutritious substances, he will be starved. There are errors respecting the atonement of Christ, which, if a man believe, he must perish; and whatever he believe, if he believe not the *truth* respecting it, he cannot be saved. There are many very strong believers in hell, and on the road to hell; but they are those who have believed a lie, and not the truth as it is in Jesus.

The second truth referred to is an equally important one. Not only is it the *truth* that must be believed, if we would be saved, but the truth must be *believed* in order to our being saved. Knowing it, understanding the terms in which it is stated, speculating about it, talking about it, fighting about it, will not do if it be not believed; just as looking at nourishing provision, smelling it, handling it, talking about it, quarrelling about it, will not suffice for our nourishment: we must eat it, else we must starve. In like manner, of whatever intellectual exercise saving truth may be the subject, if it be not really believed, we can derive no saving advantage from it. Let us never forget these two principles. It is the truth that must be believed, and the truth must be believed in order to our having a personal interest in the christian salvation.

Our Lord proceeds to state, in language no less enigmatical and paradoxical than any which he had yet employed in the preceding declarations, the intimate and permanent connection which subsists between him and all who believe the truth respecting his saving character and work,—a connection originating in, and maintained by, the faith of this truth, and the important and blissful consequences which result from this connection. “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.”¹ These words assert the intimate and permanent connection between Christ and believers, and trace it to its cause. The words

¹ John vi. 56.

that follow unfold the blessed results of this intimate and permanent connection. "As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."¹

I have already shown at length, that the phrase "he that eateth me," is equivalent to, 'he that believeth the truth respecting me as the bread of life,—as him who has given his flesh for the life of the world.' Now, says our Lord, he who does so, "dwelleth in me, and I in him." There are two ideas suggested by these words,—most intimate connection: 'he is in me, and I in him;' and permanent intimate connection: 'he dwelleth—abideth—in me; and I dwell—abide—in him.' The food which nourishes, is incorporated with that which it sustains,—becomes a constituent part of it.

The *union* of Christ and believers, is a doctrine often taught by our Lord and his apostles. This union is of a twofold character. It is, in the language of technical theology, both *legal* and *spiritual*; in plainer terms, the expression indicates intimate relation—that is, the legal union; and it indicates, also, community of spiritual life, manifesting itself in community of sentiment, feeling, and enjoyment,—that is, the spiritual union.

The legal union, or union of relation, may be thus described:—As Jesus Christ was, by a Divine appointment, so identified as it were with those whom he came to save, as to be treated, not as he deserved, but as they deserved,—required to pay a debt which they, not he, had contracted,—to restore what they, not he, had taken away,—wounded, bruised, chastised, crushed to death, in their room,—so, by another Divine appointment, all who believe are so identified with Jesus Christ, as that they are treated, not as they deserve, but as he deserves,—treated as if they had done what he did, and merited what he merited. This is the funda-

¹ John vi. 57.

mental blessing of the christian salvation, all the rest grow out of it ; and its origin, nature, and consequences, are very strikingly expressed in these words of the apostle. “ But of God are ye in Christ Jesus (who of God is made unto us wisdom), righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” that is, ‘ justified, sanctified, redeemed.’¹

The spiritual union, or the community of spiritual life, of sentiment, and affection, and enjoyment, which exists between Christ and believers, is produced by the influence of the divine Spirit, and made manifest through the faith of the truth. Christ’s mind and heart are unfolded in his word ; when that word is, under divine influence, understood and believed, just in the degree in which it is so, it becomes the mind and the heart of the believer. So far as a man is a believer, he is of the same mind and heart with Jesus Christ. He thinks along with him, he wills along with him ; and as the holy state of our Lord’s sentiments and feelings,—their entire accordance with the mind and will of the Father,—is the principal source of his holy enjoyments, so he who has a community of mind and heart with him, must have a community of enjoyment with him. It thus that Christ dwells in the hearts of his people by faith—the hope of glory ; it is thus that his Spirit is in them, and they are in his Spirit ; it is thus, that it is not so much they that live, as Christ that lives in them ; for the life they live in the flesh is by the faith of the Son of God who loved them, and gave himself for them.² Every genuine believer is thus, both relatively and actually, united to the Saviour ; so that he is in the Saviour, and the Saviour is in him.

But our Lord’s words assert not merely the reality of this most intimate connection, but also its permanence. Believers, according to our Lord, “ dwell,” or abide, “ in him, and he dwells,” or abides, “ in them.” The relation is an indissoluble relation ; and the communion of sentiment, and feeling, and

¹ Bos, Nüsselt, Kranse.

² Eph. iii. 17. Col. i. 27. Rom. viii. 9-11. Gal. ii. 20.

enjoyment, though, in consequence of their limited and ever-improving capacities of knowledge, and holiness, and happiness, admitting of endless enlargement, can never terminate. He and they can be no more separated. The bonds which connect them, are of such a nature as to defy the power of death itself to sever them, and will bind the parties closer and closer in holy happy union for ever.

This blessed result of believing in Christ Jesus, is very strikingly described in the following words—"As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father; so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me."¹ The general thought intended to be conveyed by our Lord seems to be this—The intimate connection between believers and the Saviour is so close, as that his life secures their life;—"because he lives, they shall live also;"² and he illustrates this thought, by comparing the connection which subsists between believers and him, to the connection which subsists between him and his Father,—and the security which their connection with him affords for their life, to the security which his connection with the Father affords for his life.

It is plain that our Lord here speaks of himself as mediator—the sent of God,—not as "that eternal life which was with the Father" "from the beginning."³ "The living Father," is an expression plainly equivalent to, 'the life-giving Father, the possessor of all life and happiness, the communicator of all life and happiness, the source and fountain of existence, and intelligence, and activity, and enjoyment.' This glorious person, who, in the economy of salvation, sustains the honours of the Godhead, sent Jesus Christ as "the living bread," commissioned and qualified him to be the Saviour of men. "I live by the Father," says our Lord. Our Lord's existence and powers as a divine person, are underrived and independent. They are not different from, they are the same as, the existence and powers of the Father.

¹ John vi. 57.² John xiv. 19.³ 1 John i. 1, 2.

But our Lord is here speaking of his life as the commissioned and qualified Saviour of men. "I live," seems to be equivalent to, 'I exist as the bread of life; I, as the appointed and qualified Saviour of men, possess and exercise the power of conferring happiness.' And he thus lives "By the Father."

These words are commonly understood as equivalent to, 'through the agency of the Father; my life depends on him. He constituted me what I am, as the Saviour of men, and he enables me to discharge all the functions connected with this office, enabling me to give eternal life to as many as he hath given me.' This is no doubt the truth, and is quite in accordance with the uniform representations of Scripture, that all that Christ as mediator does for the salvation of men, is done by the power of the Father—that is, the power of the Divinity which the Son is commissioned to exercise.

At the same time, there can be doubt that the proper meaning of the phrase translated, "by the Father," is, "on account of the Father;"¹ and I rather think our Lord's intention is to say, not so much that his life, as the bread of life,—that is, his saving power,—is dependent on, as that it is secured by, the living and life-giving Father. 'Because my Father who sent me is the living and life-giving one, and he has sent me as the bread of life, to give life to the world, therefore I can give life. His life, as the life-giving Father, secures my life as the life-giving Saviour. Because he lives, I live also. The living Father must cease to live, before I, his commissioned and qualified agent for the salvation of men, lose the power to save.'

In like manner as the Son, in the character of the sent of the living Father, lives by him, "so" says our Lord, "he that eateth me, shall live by me." 'As the Father is the life-giving Father, I, being sent by him, live; so, as I am the life-giving bread, he that eats me shall live. I live, as the

¹ διὰ τοῦ πατρὸς.

Saviour, because of the living Father who hath sent me. He who eateth me lives because of me, who am the life-giving bread.'

Stripped of the metaphor, the sentiment is,—‘He who believes on me shall enjoy real permanent happiness, because I am the divinely appointed and qualified Saviour; and because believing in me is the divinely appointed means of obtaining a personal interest in me as the Saviour, and in the blessings of my salvation. I can never cease to be able to save to the uttermost, because He who sent me for the very purpose of saving men, is the independent and exhaustless source of all existence, power, and enjoyment; and he who believes in me, can never cease to enjoy real happiness, for I am the divinely appointed and qualified procurer and bestower of real happiness on all who believe, in consequence of an irreversible appointment of Him who cannot change; as, because he lives, I must live, so because I live, so they must live also.’ Such, so far as I am able to apprehend it, is our Lord’s meaning in these words, which, like so many others on the same subject in Scripture, are “dark by excessive brightness.”

Our Lord now repeats a sentiment he had already uttered, the more deeply to impress it on their minds. ‘This bread which has come down from heaven, infinitely surpasses the manna of which you are accustomed to speak so highly. They who ate of the manna died. They who eat of this bread shall never die. “This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead. He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.”’¹

In these words our Lord distinctly states, that this bread, which he has again and again asserted was himself, had come down from heaven, claiming obviously pre-existence, and pre-existence in heaven. The manna came down from

¹ John vi. 58.

the upper regions of the atmosphere, not from heaven, properly so called; but Jesus came down from the heaven of heavens, from the bosom of the Father, where he had been from the ages of eternity.

It may be said, indeed it has been said, that this argument overthrows itself by proving too much; for surely the flesh and blood of which our Lord speaks, did not come down from heaven. This is, however, by no means implied in the argument. "The Son of Man" is here just equivalent to, 'the Messiah,' and is used, not in its etymological, but in its conventional, signification. All that it implies is, that the pre-existent divine person who descended from heaven, and, when the object of the descent was accomplished, ascended up where he was before, united himself to human flesh and blood for the most wise and gracious purposes, especially for those sufferings and that death which were necessary to secure the redemption of a lost world. It is a mode of expression of the same kind as saying, 'when our present king was a midshipman.'¹

As this mystical bread far excelled the manna in its origin, so it also, in a corresponding degree, excelled it in its efficacy. It is not with this heavenly bread as with the manna. The ancestors of those whom our Lord addressed, had eaten of the manna, but they had not lived for ever. They were all dead thousands of years ago. The manna does not seem to have had any greater power to sustain, or to prolong life, than any other species of wholesome food. It could not counteract the fearful efficacy of the original curse—"Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return;"² nor of the additional curse denounced on that unbelieving generation—"Your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness."³

But this heavenly bread has the power of counteracting a more awful curse than either of these—the curse that

¹ This was written during the reign of William the Fourth.

² Gen. iii. 19.

³ Numb. xiv. 29.

dooms the immortal soul of man to the second death. It has the power of communicating, and sustaining, and prolonging, to all eternity, a better life than that forfeited by sin—a divine, a heavenly life: “He that eateth of this bread shall live for ever.” On eating it, he shall begin to live a new, a higher, a holier, a happier, life. That life shall be sustained by the continued eating this mystical bread, and shall never, never come to an end.

It deserves notice, that, in the whole of this passage, the enjoyment of eternal life—that is, real permanent happiness—is represented as connected, not with having eaten the bread of life, but with eating it. The faith of the Gospel, by which an individual is interested in the saving benefits which were procured for men by the atoning sacrifice of our Lord, is not a transient act, but a habitual exercise. The bread of life must be our daily food; and, just in the measure in which we feed on this heavenly manna, shall we realise the vigour, and activity, and enjoyment, of the heavenly life.

Thus have we arrived at the close of that interesting and instructive discourse, which our Lord delivered in the synagogue of Capernaum.¹ It is a discourse certainly not without its difficulties, but it is richly replete with the most important and delightful principles of the christian faith.

It may be useful, previously to our finally taking our leave of it, as a subject of exposition, to recal briefly to our minds the occasion, the design, and the manner, of this important discourse.²

The *occasion* of the discourse was furnished by the mercenary professions, and pertinacious adherence, of a multitude, who were moved by the hope of his gratifying their national ambition, and perhaps equally by the expectation of being fed, without their own care and cost, by his mira-

¹ John vi. 59.

² For much contained in the succeeding paragraphs, I am indebted to Dr Pye Smith. “Scripture Testimony,” vol. ii. pp. 124-127.

culous power. They sought him because they had eaten of the loaves, and been filled; and they showed what was uppermost in their minds, by hinting that the most acceptable miracle he could perform, would be one similar to that of the manna in the wilderness. The more politic of them, probably, extended their views farther, and contemplated his being able to support armies for the establishment of their expected dominion over other nations. From the appetite of hunger, Jesus, who could with dignity employ any object or circumstance as a vehicle of divine instruction, derived the occasion of this address, and taught them that they were labouring under a deeper necessity, and that God had graciously provided a suitable relief.

The *design* of the discourse was to break the charm of his hearers' destructive ambition, to wean them from their low sensuous views, to show them the nature of true happiness, and to unfold to them the only method of attaining it.

The *manner* in which he prosecuted this design, was by showing that man's true happiness consisted, not in sensible and present enjoyments, but in spiritual and eternal blessings; that he had been divinely commissioned and qualified to bestow such blessings, not on one nation only, but on mankind generally, and that faith in him was necessary to the obtaining a personal interest in these blessings; that to render himself capable of making men really and permanently happy, it was necessary that he should suffer and die as a piacular victim for the transgressions of men; and that the belief of the truth on that all-important subject, was as necessary to a man's deriving advantage from his sacrifice, as eating is to a man deriving advantage from nourishing food; that, while they continued under the unbroken influence of their carnal desires and worldly prejudices, they laboured under a moral incapacity of receiving and enjoying the blessings he came to procure and bestow; and that nothing short of a divine influence could emancipate them from the power of this present evil world, and enable them to receive

what was freely given them of God. With regard to the particular form of the discourse, its principal subject wears the aspect of a prediction—an unfulfilled prediction—with regard to the manner in which he was to accomplish the salvation of men, and the manner in which they were to obtain a personal interest in that salvation.

The whole discourse is marked by that mixture of literal and figurative diction which is one of the most characteristic features of the Old Testament prophetic discourses, and by that envelope of obscurity which was necessary to guard the public prediction of any future event. The event predicted in this case, was the extreme sufferings and cruel death of the Saviour. Of this catastrophe it was his manner to speak obscurely to his public and promiscuous audiences, and it was only to his disciples in private, and occasionally, that he, greatly to their surprise, foretold it in plain terms. The keeping in view these general remarks respecting the occasion, design, tenor, and form of the discourse, will be of use to us in enabling us more readily to call up the important truths to which our attention has been turned in these expositions.

III.—THE EFFECTS OF THIS DISCOURSE ON HIS DISCIPLES IN WORD, AND ON HIS DISCIPLES IN DEED.

JOHN VI. 60-71.

§ 1. *On his Professed Disciples.*

The impression made by this discourse on those who heard it, is described by the evangelist in the sixtieth verse:—
“Many therefore of his disciples, when they had heard this, said, This is an hard saying; who can hear it?”¹ The “disciples” is here plainly a general term, descriptive of all who, under the impression that Jesus was a divine messenger, probably the Messiah, were in the habit of waiting on his ministrations, and of course comprehended under it per-

¹ John vi. 60.

sons of considerably diversified views respecting the design of the Messiah's mission, and the nature of his kingdom. The great body of these disciples seem plainly to have been looking only for a temporal prince, and a national deliverance. To them the discourse which they had heard must have been anything but satisfactory. Jesus had had a very fair opportunity afforded him of avowing himself, in plain terms, the long-expected deliverer of Israel, and of commencing that career which, as they hoped, was to end in the emancipation of the chosen people, and the subjugation of the world. But instead of doing this, while he had not indistinctly intimated that he was indeed the promised Messiah, he had spoken nothing about raising armies, fighting battles, taking cities, obtaining wealth and honour for his followers, but had delivered to them a mystical discourse, which, so far as they could get a glimpse of its meaning, was altogether inconsistent with their views, fatal to their hopes—a discourse about the superiority of the meat that endureth unto eternal life over the bread that perisheth—about himself being the bread of life—about his coming down from heaven, and giving his flesh for the life of the world—about the necessity of eating his flesh, and drinking his blood.

The effect produced by the delivery of such a discourse, to such an audience, was just what might have been anticipated. Many of them, when they heard it, said "This is an hard saying; who can hear it?" The word "saying" refers not exclusively to the concluding observation recorded in the fifty-eighth verse, but to the whole discourse. The words of these dissatisfied disciples admit of a two-fold interpretation. They may mean, 'This is a very obscure discourse—so obscure as to be unintelligible; who can comprehend—who can make sense of it?' Or, 'This discourse contains in it sentiments quite irreconcilable with our most fixed opinions, and most fondly cherished hopes; who can believe it?' The last of these is, I apprehend, the true import of the words, as spoken by these disciples. This seems plain from the fact

that they were offended at the discourse. They were stumbled by it, that is, it shook their faith in Jesus as the Messiah. This seems the meaning of the phrase "offended," when used in such a connection. "Blessed," said our Lord to John the Baptist's messengers—"Blessed is he who is not offended in me."¹ And we find they were so stumbled, that many of them went back and walked no more with him. It seems obvious that it was not what was obscure, but what was plain, in our Lord's discourse, that was offensive to them, and that led them to the conclusion, that it was in vain to expect from Jesus the Nazarene, what they had been accustomed to expect from the Messiah. "This is an hard saying," seems not so much, 'These statements are unintelligible,'—as 'These statements are inadmissible;' and "who can hear it?" seems not so much—'Who can understand them?' as 'Who can believe them?'

These expressions of dissatisfaction were not openly made. They only murmured such things "among themselves." But Jesus knew in himself what was the state of their minds. "He needed not that any should testify to him of man, he knew what was in man." He made it plain that He was the searcher of the hearts—the trier of the reins—a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart—and that all things were naked and open to Him with whom they had to do. "When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, Doth this offend you?"² 'Does this stumble you? Do these statements, which, though not fully understood by you, are plainly incompatible with your opinions and wishes respecting the blessings to be obtained and bestowed by the Messiah—do these statements

¹ Matth. xi. 6.

² The shrewd remark of Archbishop Whately, in reference to the Apostle Paul's writings, is equally applicable to the doctrines of his Master. "There is good reason to believe that the chief objection to St Paul's writings is not from the things *hard* to be understood which they contain, but from the things *easy* to be understood, the doctrines so *plainly* taught by him."

³ John vi. 61.

shake to dissolution your half-formed faith in me as the Messiah? Even though they should, I cannot retract them, I must reiterate them. Everything I have to say to you, everything that is to happen to me, will more and more confirm the conviction that I am not the kind of Messiah you are expecting, or wish for? "What and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?"¹

These words are somewhat difficult of interpretation. They are elliptical. As they stand in the original they are just—"and," or even, "if ye see the Son of man ascend up where he was before." There are some things, and some very important things, stated here, which are perfectly plain; let us look at them first. Our Lord asserts here that the Son of Man,—that is, himself as Messiah,—“was about to ascend up where he was before.” The Jews, as appears from chapter xii. 34, expected that the Messiah was to “abide for ever,” remain permanently among them. Our Lord intimates here, that, instead of remaining on earth to establish the worldly kingdom they were anticipating, he was, after having given his flesh for the life of the world, to return to heaven from whence he had come down.

The pre-existence of our Lord—his pre-existence in heaven—previously to his appearing among men, is as plainly stated in these words as language can state it, and with all the ingenuity which belongs to the opposers of that doctrine, and we readily acknowledge they are possessed of no ordinary degree of it, they have failed, and ever must fail, of bringing any other meaning out of them. Having finished the work which he was sent to do on earth, which was chiefly to “give his flesh for the life of the world,” he was to return to the bosom of the Father, and be “glorified with the glory which he had there before the world was.”

Our Lord farther intimates, that the Jews should “see

¹ John vi. 62.

him ascend up where he was before." The word "see," is equivalent to 'shall know—know on the most satisfactory evidence.' Our Lord's apostles beheld with the bodily eye the Son of Man ascend from earth towards heaven, and all the varied evidence which supports the truth of Christianity generally assures us that he has sat down on the right hand of God in the heaven of heavens. These statements are plain enough. 'The Son of Man shall ascend up where he was before,'—'Ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before;' but what is the meaning of the words, "and if ye shall see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?"

They are plainly, as we have said, elliptical; and it is somewhat doubtful how the ellipsis should be supplied. It may be supplied thus,—“What,” that is, ‘what will you think,’ ‘what will you say,’—“if you see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?” or, ‘will you still be offended,’ “if ye see the Son of Man ascend up where he was before?” Those who consider the objection of the disciples as referring to the obscurity of our Lord's discourse, suppose that the import of these words of our Lord is,—‘You find these sayings of mine obscure, because you are disposed to understand them literally, not figuratively, as they ought to be understood. Surely when I leave the world altogether, and return to heaven, you will see that my words must be interpreted figuratively, in which case there is no difficulty of understanding them.’

I rather think the import of our Lord's *question* is this: ‘Will ye still be offended with my doctrine with respect to the spiritual nature of the blessings which I, the Son of Man, have come to procure and bestow, when, by withdrawing from this world and returning to my native heaven, I have made it quite obvious that I have no design to set up such a temporal kingdom as you are dreaming of?’

The words that follow seem intended still farther to meet the misapprehensions of these murmuring disciples.

"It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life."¹ These words must be differently interpreted, according as you suppose the murmurings of the disciples directed against the statements of our Lord's discourse as unintelligible, or as inadmissible—incredible.

In the first case, the words would mean, 'You are occupied with the body of my discourse—its words. You overlook its spirit—its meaning. If you allow your mind to rest on the words and the figures merely, you will get no good from it—it will necessarily appear unintelligible; but if you lay hold of the truth which these words and figures embody, you will find that they have a meaning—a meaning powerful in producing happiness; for my words, rightly understood, are *spirit*—full of energy, and *life*—capable of communicating happiness.'

In the second case, the meaning seems to be, "'It is the Spirit that quickens.'" These words, understood literally, looking at the flesh, the body, in which the sentiment is clothed, may, indeed, well appear to be incredible;² but when you discern their spirit, there is nothing incredible in the statement made by me, a divinely accredited messenger, that men are to be saved by faith in me, dying as a victim in their room.' By other interpreters the meaning has been thus given—'It is spiritual things—spiritual blessings—that constitute man's true happiness. The flesh profits nothing. Carnal, material, temporary benefits, such as power, and honour, and splendour, which you are desiring and hoping for, do not, cannot, constitute men truly happy. "My words are spirit, and they are life." My doctrine is a spiritual and a life-giving thing. He who understands and believes it obtains possession of true permanent happi-

¹ John vi. 63.

² "What could my flesh avail you to eternal life, even if you were carnally to eat of it?"—SLIGHTINGIUS.

ness, to the attainment of which, the possession of all secular enjoyment will be found utterly ineffectual.’

Our Lord added, “But there are some of you that believe not;”¹ *q. d.*, ‘I know that some—that many of you—notwithstanding your professions, do not really believe me to be a divine messenger; for you are not disposed to receive as true whatever I declare to be so: you receive my doctrine only so far as it coincides with your preconceived opinions. Did you really believe, instead of saying, “This is an hard saying, who can hear it?” you would have said, It is a true saying, and we will hear it.’ It is possible, too, that our Lord meant to suggest the important truth, that it is the believer alone who can experimentally know that his words are spirit and life. To the unbeliever, who sees merely the outside of them, they profit nothing, they are not understood, they are not influential.

The evangelist remarks, in a kind of parenthetical note, “For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.”² He was never imposed on. When he called Judas to be an apostle, he knew that he would be the traitor.

After saying “there are some of you that believe not,” our Lord adds, “Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.”³ Our Lord refers to what he had said at the forty-fourth verse, ‘Because I was aware that many of you were not true believers in me, I told you that, unless you were drawn by the Father, unless you were taught of God, unless you heard and learned of the Father, you never could be my disciples in deed.’

The consequence of these statements made by our Lord was, that “from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him;”⁴ that is, they withdrew from attending on his teaching; they no longer fol-

¹ John vi. 64.² John vi. 64.³ John vi. 65.⁴ John vi. 66.

lowed him from place to place; they returned to their ordinary occupations, convinced that he was not the Messiah they expected or wished for. Their secular expectations were disappointed, and their real character disclosed. They saw two things very plainly: He ~~was~~ not the master they wished for, and they were not the kind of followers he wished for.

§ 2. *On his disciples in deed.*

When those who had professed to be his disciples were retiring in crowds, our Lord turned to the little band of the chosen twelve, who seem always to have kept close to him, and said to them, "Will ye also go away?"¹—'Are ye also disposed to leave me?' In these words, our Lord intimates that he wishes no unwilling followers—that they who do not will to stay with him may go.²

With a single exception, which our Lord himself immediately adverts to, the apostles were sincere believers in his divine mission and Messiahship. They were in many things prejudiced and mistaken; but they were fully persuaded that their Master was the promised deliverer, and they were expecting from him something better than a mere temporal deliverance.

Peter, with his characteristic forwardness and ardour, replied to the touching question of his Master, "Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe, and are sure, that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God."³ It is as if he had said, 'We cannot depart from thee, for we know not where else to go to find such a master. We have no wish to depart. Thou, thou only, hast what we so much need—the words of eternal life; thou, thou alone, canst teach us the way to true happiness, and lead us in the way which thou openest up to us. We are

¹ John vi. 67.

² "Jesus neminem cogit atque hoc ipso arctius sibi suos jungit."—BENGEI.

³ John vi. 68, 69.

fully persuaded thou art the promised Messiah, the Son of God.'

It is difficult, or rather impossible, for us to say accurately what ideas Peter at this time attached to the appellation, "Son of the living God." We know what it means; and that in all its extent of meaning, it is applicable to him to whom Peter applies it.

In reply to Peter's confession in the name of his brethren, our Lord gave the following most impressive warning,— "Have I not chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?"¹ The word devil, in our language, is the distinctive appellation of a particular class of depraved intelligences. The original term is less restrictive. Here it is equivalent either to enemy,² or false accuser.³ 'Even in this little band, in whose name you have professed unbroken attachment, there is one false-hearted person.' The remark was made to put them all on their guard, to make each of them say, "Lord, is it I?"

The reference was to Judas Iscariot, who afterwards betrayed him into the hands of his enemies.⁴ It has been supposed, and the conjecture is probable, that Judas, who had originally connected himself with Jesus from worldly motives, in the hope that he would secure a high place in the kingdom to be established, first conceived the thought of betraying his Master on hearing statements so completely irreconcilable with the notion that he was to be a temporal prince.

I cannot conclude my illustrations of this discourse better, than in the pertinent and pious reflections of Dr Doddridge.⁵

¹ John vi. 70.

² Est. viii. 1.

³ "Non solum sibi malus, sed etiam aliis periculosus."—BENGEL.

⁴ John vi. 71.

⁵ I take this opportunity of expressing my cordial admiration of what Dr Doddridge has called the "Improvement" of the various sections of his "Family Expositor." Many have equalled, some have surpassed, Dr Doddridge as interpreters of the New Testament, but no man seems ever to have drunk deeper into its spirit, or so happily to have expressed the devout and practical reflections which a careful perusal of it is fitted to awaken in an enlightened polished christian mind.

“We have, through the Divine goodness, been made acquainted with ~~these~~ gospel truths in their full evidence and mutual connection, which were more obscurely hinted to those who attended on Christ’s personal ministry. May we hearken to the spiritual sense of this sublime and excellent discourse, earnestly entreating the influences of Divine grace, that we may not only be drawn to Christ, but be so firmly attached to his interests, that whosoever else forsake him, we may never go. And may instances of apostacy, which, alas, are to be found in our age, as well as in the primitive one, lead us to serious self-inquiry, and to humble dependence on Him, who alone can ‘strengthen, stablish, and settle us’ in the faith of the truth, and enable us to ‘hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of our hope, firm unto the end.’”

END OF VOLUME FIRST.

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